

THE READER'S DIGEST BOOK OF WORLD TRAVEL



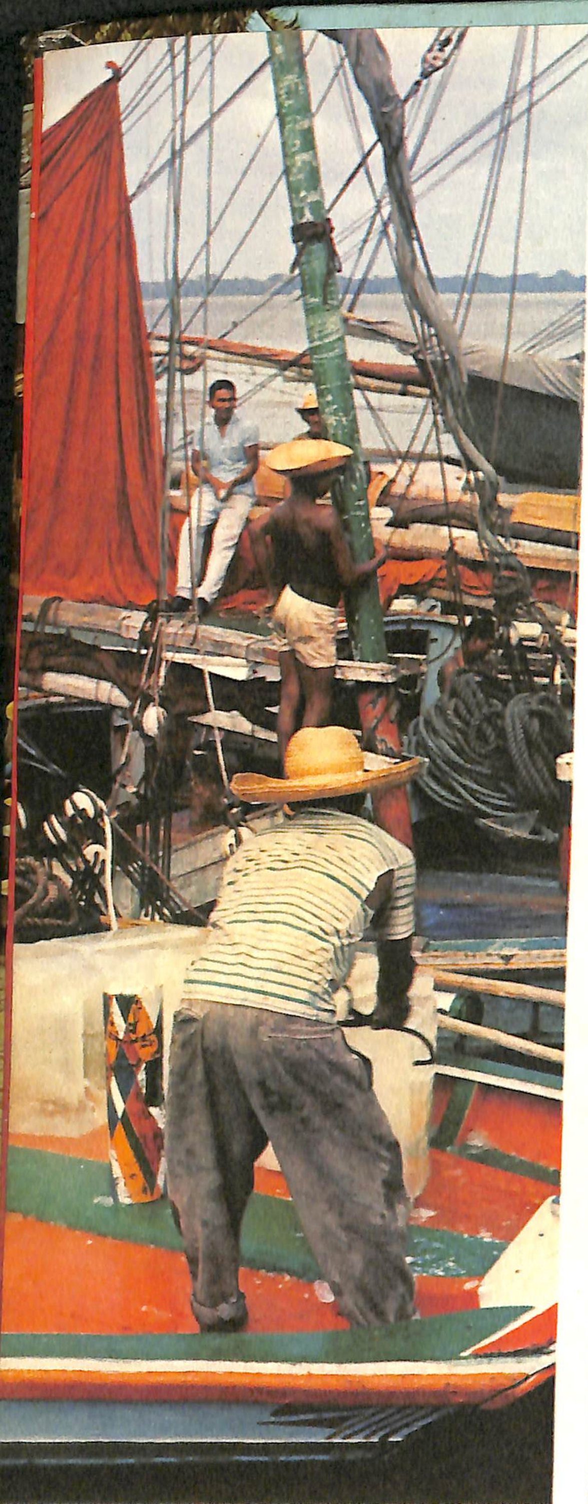
This anthology dwells on travel for travel's sake . . . for the wonder of a panorama at sunset, for the half-heard sound of drums throbbing in the hills. Writers and photographers are your guides through a bustling world; and from their eager curiosity come graphic glimpses of people, places and the enchantment of strange lands

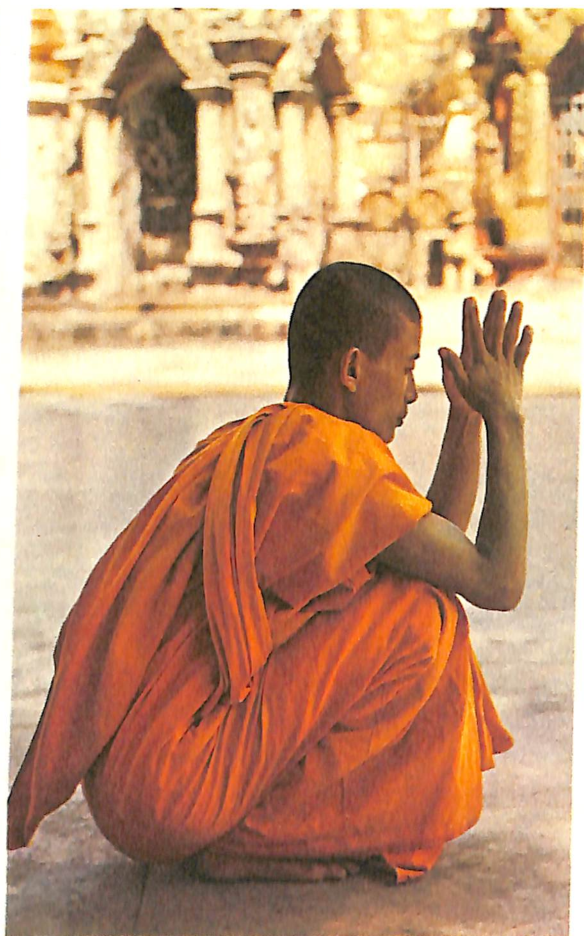
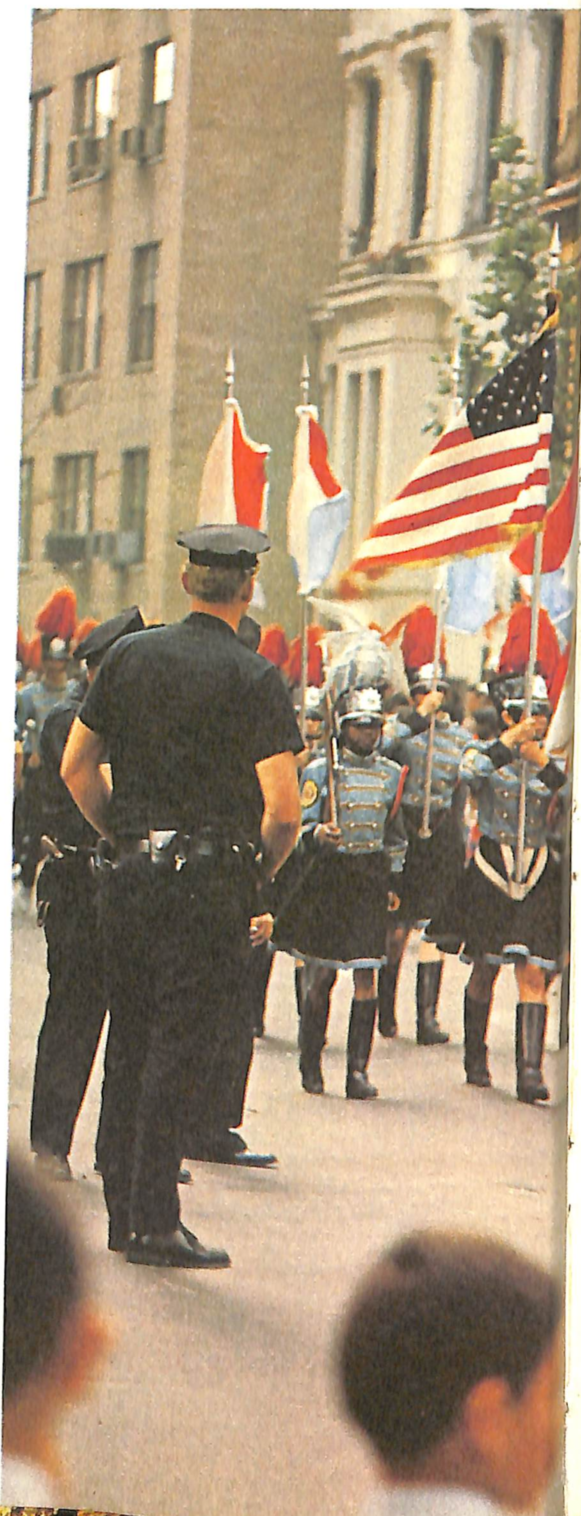
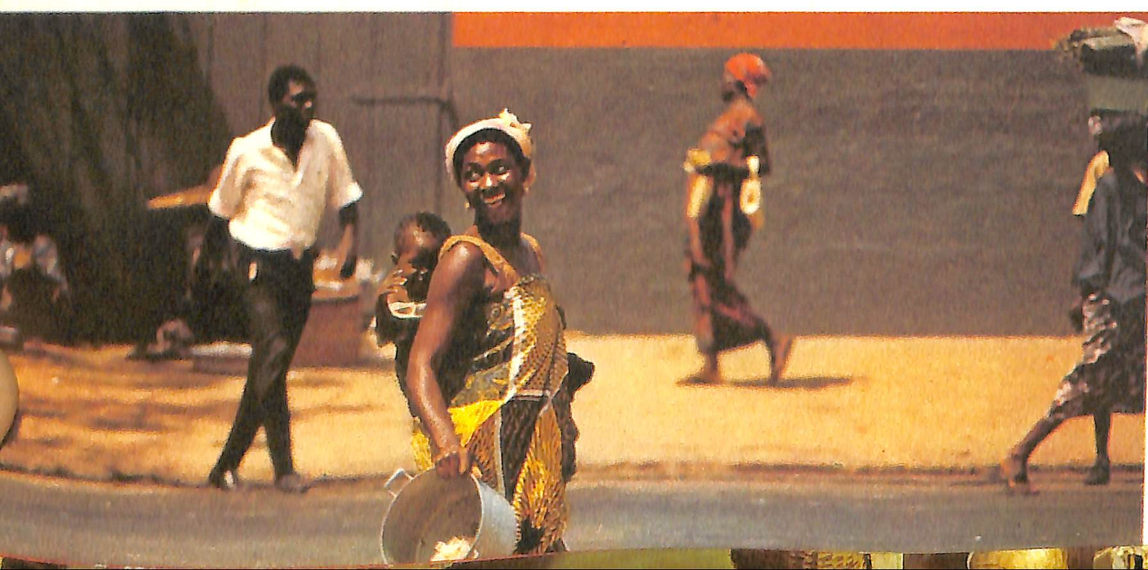
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The Reader's Digest

BOOK OF WORLD TRAVEL





Itinerary



Itinerary



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CLARENCE HALL

Angkor, the lost kingdom

During the centuries when the great builders of medieval Europe were raising magnificent cathedrals and massive fortresses, the Khmers were building Angkor on the other side of the world. Over this incredible stone forest of temples, pagodas and palaces still hovers the haunting mystery: what happened here?



On a January afternoon in 1861, a French naturalist named Henri Mouhot was hacking his way through the almost impenetrable jungle of Cambodia when, suddenly, he burst into a clearing and stopped dead in his tracks. Before his astonished eyes loomed the outlines of a huge stone structure. Its long grey battlements appeared to stretch into infinity, magnificent terraces and galleries vaulted upward, and five towers shaped like lotus buds soared into the heavens. Touched by the setting sun, the whole grey mass burned fiery red.

His search for rare insects forgotten, Mouhot plunged about for days, exploring not only this great temple—which he called 'a rival to Solomon's'—but also scores of other structures which he found half-submerged in the jungle. Excitedly he recorded his conviction that here were 'perhaps the grandest, the most important and the most artistically perfect monuments the past has left to us'.

Mouhot's estimate was not too inflated. He had stumbled upon the enormous ruins of Angkor, legendary capital of the Khmer Empire. The empire had once stretched from the South China Sea to the Gulf of Siam—including all of present-day Cambodia, part of Thailand, Laos and Vietnam—and had embraced the most brilliant civilization ever to flourish in South-east Asia.

The Khmers came up out of the mists swiftly, were the marvel and the scourge of the Orient for 600 years, then disappeared abruptly and mysteriously in 1432, leaving little trace of the brilliant opulence of their empire save for the 200 or more massive monuments in the Angkor area. But these stony testaments are of such magnitude and splendour as to dwarf the wonders of Egypt, Greece and Rome.

Over forty square miles of the Cambodian forest is covered with the ruins of the cities and temples built by the Khmers, the greatest of whose rulers was King Suryavarman II, who in the twelfth century built Angkor Wat to be his own tomb. This gigantic structure, whose acorn-shaped towers stand against the skyline like mountains of stone, marked the high-water mark of the Khmers. Freya Stark has said of it that 'its ultimate perfection can stand a bracketing with the Parthenon'. This style of building, with giant towers encrusted with sculptures, is said to

The contorted roots of a banyan tree frame the enigmatic face of a god from the gateway of the temple of Ta Som. The stones, carved with incredible precision, have been wrenched apart by the tree's growth



A garuda—a grotesque god with the beak of an eagle, the body of a man, and the feet of a lion

Detail from the front of Banteai Srei, the 'Citadel of the Women'. This temple, completed in 968, is about twenty miles from Angkor. Indra, god of the firmament and of the beneficent rains, rides the three-headed elephant Airavata and brings rain to the earth





Giant stone faces of the Buddha guard one of the five main entrances to the city of Angkor Thom

reflect the nostalgia of the Khmers for their home in the mountains to the north, which they still remembered after the world of the plain lay securely in their power.

In 1907 the French Government began the long task of releasing the lost city from the jungle's grasp. Today Angkor—close to the town and airport of Siem Reap, in north-west Cambodia—is being resurrected by one of the most fantastic jobs of archaeological restoration ever attempted.

The operation began under the direction of the French scholar Bernard Groslier. He pointed out that releasing the huge temples from the jungle had brought on a new problem: the monuments, no longer protected by the vegetation which had held them for centuries, were being eroded by the excessive heat and torrents of tropical rains.

What was worse, their fragile sandstone was beginning to disintegrate under the attack of a water-borne bacillus. The only way to save them was to dismantle them stone by stone, and re-erect them on reinforced concrete foundations surrounded by drainage pipes. Parts of the temples exposed to the mysterious 'stone disease' could then be treated with antibiotics, to prevent any further damage.

One of the finest achievements so far is the reconstitution of an ancient causeway, 120 yards long and bordered by a line of fifty-four giant statues on each side, many of which had tumbled into a moat. Work is also proceeding on one of Angkor's largest temples, the beautiful five-floor-high Baphuon, and on the 800-yard gallery of the most famous temple, Angkor Wat, whose bas-reliefs are one of the world's marvels.

From the bas-reliefs, the Khmer inscriptions and from ancient accounts written by Chinese visitors, scholars have supplied at least partial answers to the enigma of the lost civilization. The Khmers settled their capital around Angkor in the early ninth century, and began their rapid rise to power and glory. Chinese traders came and went, as did merchant-adventurers from India. The Khmers assimilated from Hinduism and Buddhism what they could use, and created their own culture. Their empire, called Kambuja—Cambodia—lasted until the fifteenth century and was then mysteriously snuffed out.

But while they lasted, the kings of Khmer were a remarkable breed. To build and sustain their capital, which was as affluent as Babylon, they went to war periodically and brought back whole nations in chains to quarry the rock.

In the valley of the great river Mekong, they tore out the jungle to plant endless fields of rice. They laid out a network of paved roads, mastered the science of hydraulic engineering, and established a water-system even more incredible than their temples. Digging dikes and canals on the flood plains that stretch in all directions from the Tonle Sap—a natural lake—they threaded the country with a spider's web of reservoirs and canals, some of them forty miles long, that provided perpetual irrigation for their fields.

To put down their enemies and extend their empire, the kings of Khmer trained 200,000 elephants as steeds of battle, created machines to hurl arrows, maintained navies of arrow-proof canoes and commanded huge armies. When they went into battle, states one inscription, 'the dust of their armies did blot out the sun'.

Angkor Wat is still a living centre of the Buddhist religion, one of the holy places visited by pilgrims. Here lights burn before statues of the Buddha in a gallery of the temple





THE WORLD'S LARGEST SHRINE



The stone galleries and towers of Angkor Wat reflected in the waters of the moat. The temple compound contains thousands of square feet of sculpture, illustrating scenes from the legends of the Hindu gods Vishnu and Krishna, together with historical events from the life of King Suryavarman II, who built Angkor Wat in the twelfth century. The form of the temple is derived from the ziggurat type of architecture—square terraces, meant to be viewed by the gods flying overhead

Buddhist priests walking on the terrace on the west side of the great square of Angkor Thom, the new capital built by the Khmers after Angkor was sacked in 1177



The faces of gods peer out from the creeper which has surrounded them for centuries



The causeway of giants at Angkor Thom. Beneath their arms they hold Vasuki, the sacred serpent which girdles the earth. Giants and demons, pulling on the serpent in the mythical Sea of Milk, are said to make the earth go round

Despite the drain of many wars, the Khmers created a society luxurious in the extreme. Only the slaves suffered; they were many and cheap. Chou Ta-Kuan, a Chinese visitor, reported that 'only the poor have no servants at all'. Beguiled by 'rice easy to gain, women easy to find, houses easy to manage, commerce easy to direct', Chou stayed on for eleven months to enjoy the abundant life.

Perhaps it was this easy life that was the Khmers' undoing, leaving them open to conquest by new and vigorous peoples. In 1431 the Siamese, former vassals of the Khmers, swept into Angkor, pillaging the capital. Though the Khmers rallied to drive the Siamese out, a year later–suddenly, inexplicably–the Khmers disappeared from the great city and never came back.

What happened exactly?

Some authorities believe that the people, tired of war, were convinced that Angkor, so close to the territory of the rampaging Siamese, was indefensible. Others assert that a devastating plague finished them off. Still others maintain that it was a revolt of slaves who rose up to slaughter their masters, loot Angkor's riches, and leave for ever the hated scene of their bondage.

Choose your own answer. The real solution to the fate of the Khmers' great civilization may never be known.

Looking across the roofs of Angkor Wat to part of the causeway, which is 380 yards long. On either side of the causeway is a naga serpent balustrade. The Cambodians now pasture their cattle among the ruins

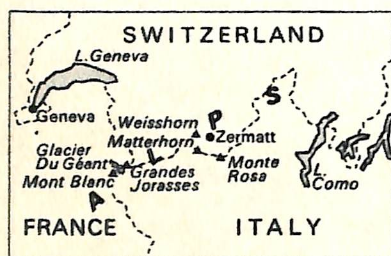
A stone lion guarding the access to the outer causeway which leads to the temple of Angkor Wat

The smiling face of an apsara – a dancing girl – looking out from a stone frieze at Angkor



The majestic Alps

Hannibal of Carthage crossed the Alps to overcome the power of ancient Rome, Caesar to conquer Gaul and Britain, Napoleon to subdue Italy. Today these majestic mountains attract sportsmen rather than soldiers of fortune, but their challenge is as formidable as ever



COMPARED to other continents, Europe today seems neat and tidy. Its towns, its tilled fields, its roads and railways, its rivers and canals, its villages, with their cottages and church spires, all suggest that man is master, that nature has been tamed and bridled.

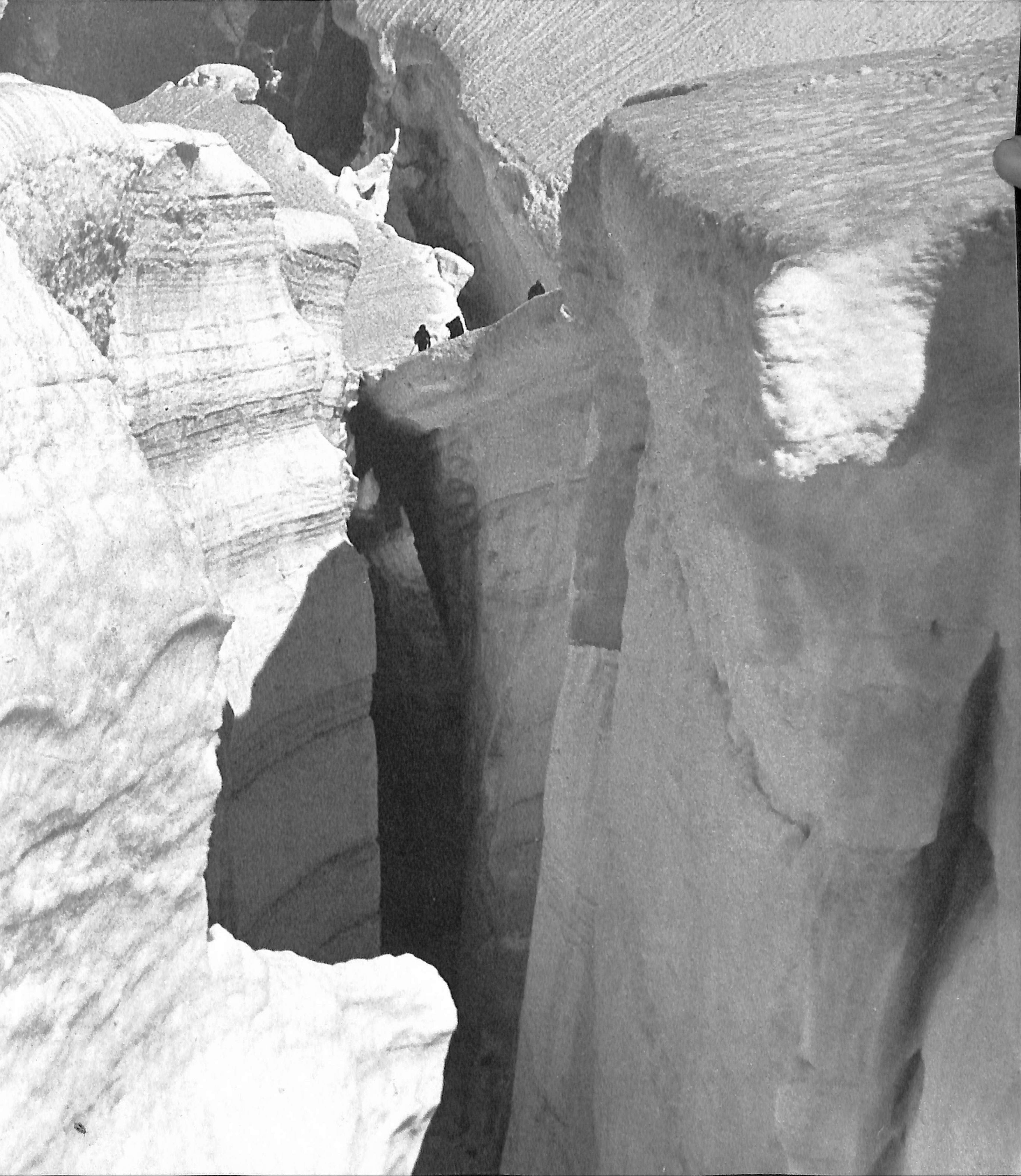
But in the Alps not even the most arrogant man can cling long to the pretension of human superiority over nature. The mountains dwarf him, inspiring awe, demanding respect. They put man in his place, despite all his modern scientific aids. They yield to men of courage and skill; but they punish reckless and thoughtless adventurers without mercy.

The ancient Romans were content to keep to the passes through the Alps without bothering to explore the peaks above the snow line. That task was left mainly to a handful of tough amateur mountaineers from Britain in the last century. They struggled across glaciers whose waters feed Europe's greatest rivers—the Rhine, the Rhône, the Danube and the Po. They inched their way towards peaks—not to found empires, but because the summits of the Matterhorn and Mont Blanc were there.

From these early days to the present generation of climbers, who are undeterred even by such terrifying challenges as the North Face of the Eiger, the Alps have achieved a special mystique of their own. Peaks like the Matterhorn have been endowed with an almost religious symbolism. 'Mountains,' one climber has written, 'do not seem hostile to man. No. They put on an aspect of higher dignity.' And another mountaineer has explained the eternal fascination of the snow-covered peaks. When he climbs, he sees mountains 'as no one has ever painted them, full of wonders that no fairy tale has ever shown me, even in dreams'.

The glaciers round Mont Blanc show the hostile face of the mountains: the climber puts a foot wrong at his peril, and the crevasses give up their dead years later, when the ice has crept its slow way to the warmer regions at the mountain's foot. The glaciers are a relic of the Ice Ages, when life was a continual struggle against the cold. And their grip has slackened only slightly since then: there is still enough ice in the glaciers of the world to cover the whole of South America.

The Glacier du Géant, in the Mont Blanc massif, is scarred by giant crevasses. This crevasse appears to be only 200 feet deep, but it has a false bottom, and no one has yet returned to tell how vast it really is





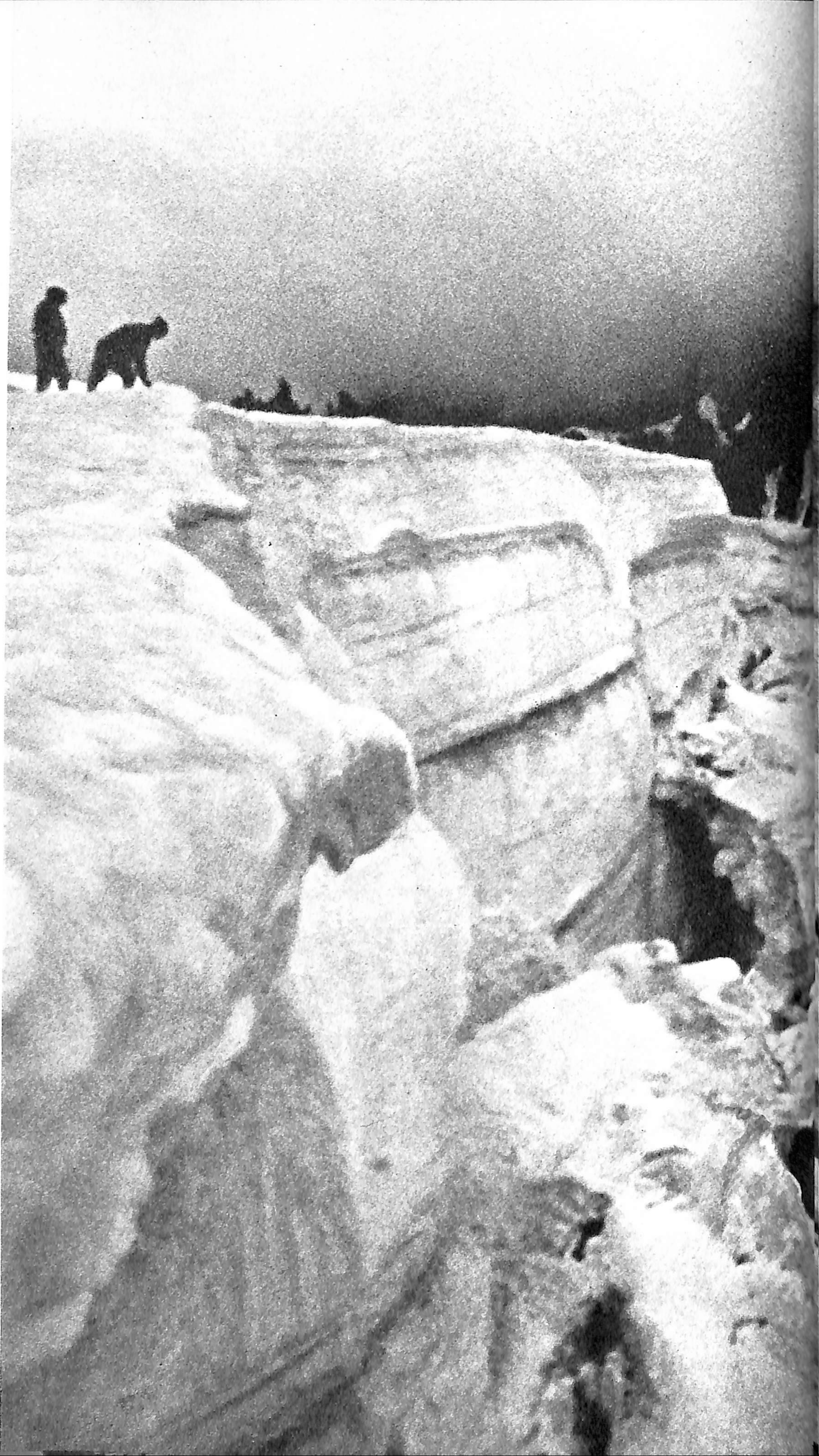


The Alps in their friendliest aspect—the Matterhorn from a road near Zermatt

The mountaineers' reward for conquering Mont Blanc—the view across a sea of cloud to the vast pyramid of the Grandes Jorasses, with the Weisshorn and Monte Rosa in the distance

WHERE THE ICE AGE LINGERS

The Glacier du Géant, with the forbidding rock spires of the Grand Capucin beyond. Like all glaciers, it consists of a compacted mass of snow and ice, and originates above the snowline, where the annual snowfall exceeds the annual amount of melting and drainage. The ice strata, which show as clearly marked bands, are laid down at the rate of one a year. Crevasses occur where the ice splits as it passes over uneven ground. Natural bridges of ice and snow seem to offer an easy way across, but are often deceptively treacherous



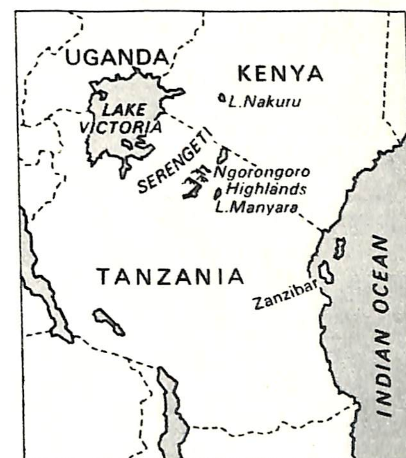




ANTHONY SMITH

Afloat over Africa

In 1862 Jules Verne, with uncanny foresight, wrote 'Five Weeks in a Balloon', a tale of exploring Africa by air. Its hero was a Dr Samuel Fergusson, scientist, balloonist and reporter for a London daily. A hundred years later, in 1962, Anthony Smith made this fantasy come true



THE MAIN PURPOSE of our first flight by balloon over part of the African continent was to assess the reaction of the animals in as wide a variety of habitats as possible. No one knew how they would behave below a balloon, but plainly their particular environment would influence them. The Manyara area, in Tanzania, was a complex of utterly different types of countryside. Our camp bordered on a large coppice of yellow thorn trees, and the Rift Valley wall was a few miles to the west of it. At the foot of this cliff, and running along in its shelter, was true forest. Identification of the plant species indicated that this belt of trees had formerly been connected to the huge tropical enclave of the Congo basin. It was now a fragment, but large enough to support a population of forest creatures. The balloon would surely drift over it for at least part of the journey.

Then there was the lake. This was either bordered by reedy or dusty marsh, the haunt of buffalo and reed-buck and hippos, or flat and muddy shore-lines. Anything might be wandering about on those wide-open spaces, such as giraffes and gazelles, but the actual watery and weedy part of the mud is the home of an infinity of birds. Some 600 species have been spotted at Lake Manyara, and its mixed environment makes it an ideal place for observing such a representative collection of African bird life. It is also an amazing spot for flamingoes and pelicans. Sometimes there are a million of these two species living on that stretch of water.

We took off from Manyara, sailing effortlessly, wonderfully, into the vast blue expanse of sky above our launching site. When the take-off had been achieved, and the thorn trees were gliding easily beneath us, I watched the camp recede at some ten miles an hour. There were the waving hands of the ground-crew team, and all the vehicle tracks. There were the big lorry marks. There was the path we took to look for hippos. And over there were the tracks leading up to, and then away from, that giant termite hummock of red-brown earth. Very quickly the camp was being swallowed up by Africa. The huge tree which had shaded the gas cylinders became as nothing. The tents disappeared; and last of all to go was the white tarpaulin on which Jambo, our balloon, had been inflated.

Seen from the basket the balloon looks unnervingly smaller than its actual 26,000 cubic feet—about the size of a five-storey house. By pulling the valve line, hydrogen is released at the top of the balloon, causing it to deflate



African elephant. When fully grown, this species can weigh seven tons



The unpredictable rhinoceros. When he charges, he can accelerate to about twenty-five m.p.h. in less than thirty yards

Yet long before that had happened all three of us in the balloon basket were looking ahead, rather than back. The world was just as exciting in every direction but, in a balloon, it is almost impossible not to look forwards. What has passed is only interesting in that it indicates the line of travel, and therefore predicts the course that is still to come.

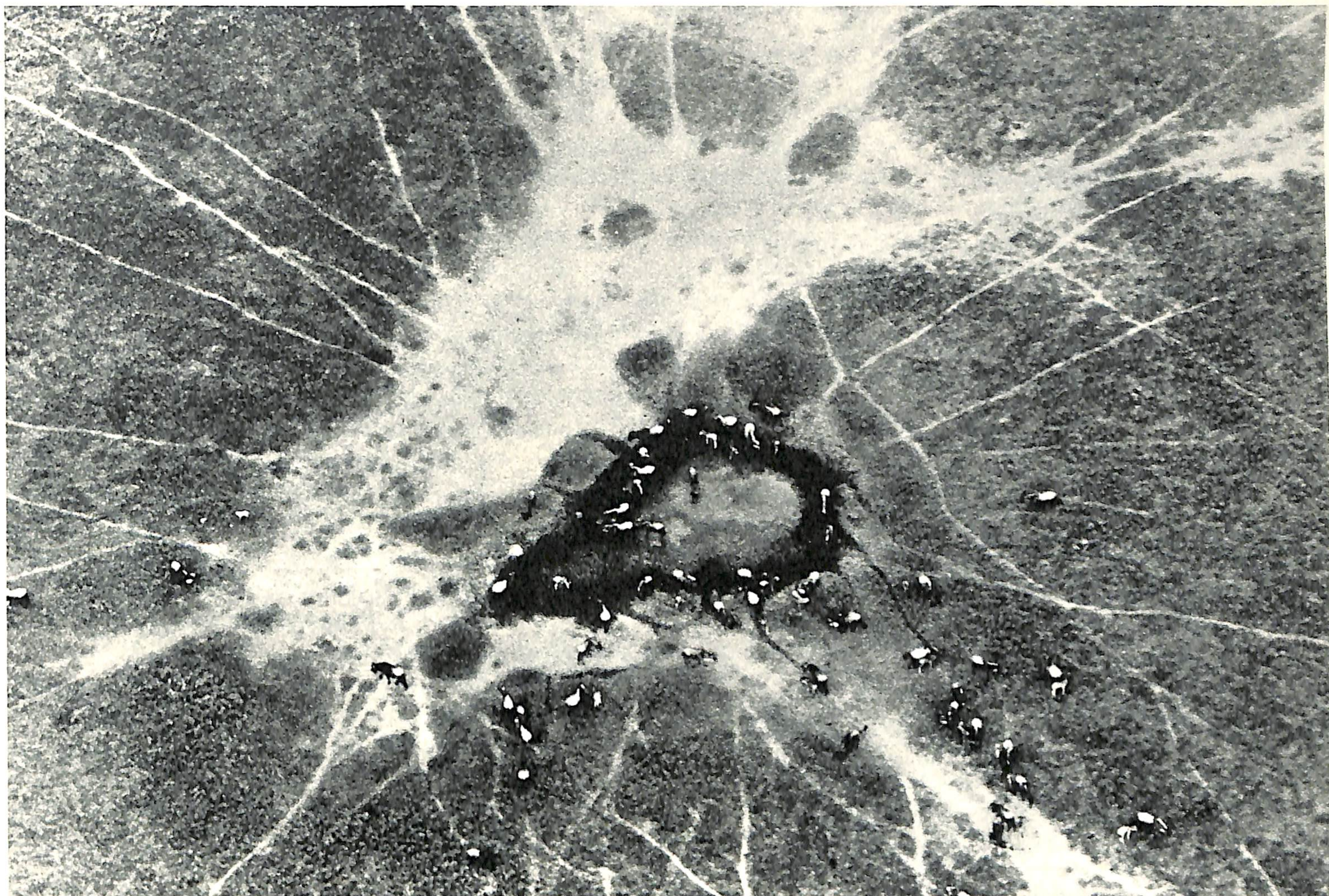
The balloon stabilized itself at 1,000 feet. In no time we were at the lake's northern edge, drifting over the huge and impenetrable wilderness of reed. It was Alan who first pointed out that certain blobs were buffaloes, the first animals we ever saw. There were thirty of them, doing absolutely nothing, and flapping their ears in the itchy heat. And then came two warthogs, snuffling along busily, and making much noise about it. At last, I said to myself, at last I was in a balloon, and having Africa pass by beneath me. For no reason beyond that, but that was more than enough, I grinned hugely at the others, and then laughed with the joy of it all.

For the first hour of that flight we floated over the lake, roughly parallel with the western cliff. The wind blew steadily. The cliff runs almost north and south, and so we gradually edged nearer to it, and nearer the shore at its feet. This was excellent. As we approached it, I was content to let the normal seepage of gas lower us gently towards the water, and I refrained from throwing out sand that would prevent this steady descent. At the water's edge, and extending in clusters from it, were the pink streaks of thousands of flamingoes. Occasionally, a streak flew into the air, and a long skein of birds moved along the shore to settle somewhere else. It was all so remote. They were busily engaged in finding food, and had no relation with the woods behind them, or the open plains, or anything beyond the mud which supported them. They certainly took no heed of us.

When we were still a mile from the shore, a group of shapes suddenly appeared as giraffes. They edged out of the wood, and wandered across to the water. One even walked into it and then, spreading himself with legs astride, contrived to drink in the only manner possible for his species. At 600 feet we passed over these splendid creatures, and knew that had we been in an aircraft they would have scattered in every direction. As it was, they did nothing. In fact, one sat down, and folded his legs tidily beneath him. His seven-foot neck still stuck up like a pole pushed over, and at some sixty degrees to the ground.

Our steady course then took us over that shore. At this point there was an enclave in the cliff through which a river ran. For millenniums its waters had eaten into the wall, and now a triangle of land stretched back from the lake with cliff on two of its sides. Into this region we floated, still at 600 feet, but with 2,000-foot ridges of rock looming up before us. For the time being we continued to watch. An elephant was down there, flapping his giant African ears widely back and forth. Suddenly, there were three more. And then, down by the stream, were a herd of buffaloes, perhaps sixty strong. Then there were more elephants, and more buffaloes. This was precisely what we had come to see.

Our last balloon flight in Africa was over the Serengeti National Park. It was the best departure of the series, and so it should have been. The flight started off with a finesse never achieved before. The first animals below us were Thomson's gazelles, slightly frightened initially, but soon quite calm. They stopped their trotting and turned to have a look at us. A rhino, fifty yards away, next saw us, but

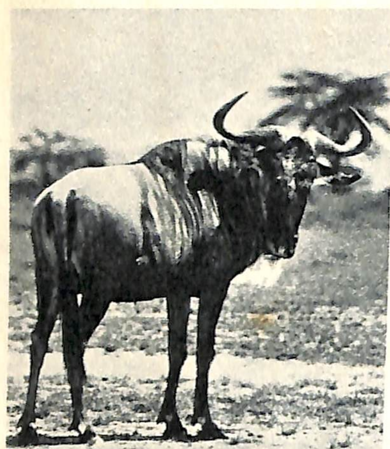


Wildebeest, stragglers from an enormous migrating herd, stand in the mud round the edge of a nearly dried-up water-hole. Water-holes are governed by strict rules of animal etiquette, determining behaviour between different groups of animals

did not raise his tail. Then a hyena, sitting by its hole, moved off straight beneath us and trotted along at our speed. We could hear the grass rustling as its furry body brushed past, and I scattered some sand on its back as we started coming too near. The intention was to travel no lower than 200 feet and no higher than 300.

It was still the calm of the morning. Well to the east of us were the Ngorongoro Highlands, now shrouded in cloud, and obviously a place where trouble could be expected. A few miles in their direction was the great crack of the Olduvai Gorge, a dry and arid scar across the ground. Beneath were the animals and a moon-shaped area of shifting sands. They had zebras cropping the grass near them, and a herd of eland further away. These big antelopes are the most timid of the lot, allegedly because they know their meat is prized. Some are being husbanded in captivity as an alternative to beef, and even from our height we could see the heavy folds of flesh. Those below us were wild, but every member of the species, whether being fattened or not, always seems to have plenty of meat on board. Their long twisted horns reaching over their necks must have often saved them.

After an hour of travelling, and a mounting concern about the big herd which lay ahead, we first caught glimpses of it. The sight was astounding. I had never imagined the world could be quite so full of animals. To begin with, they appeared



The wildebeest or gnu range across the plains in large herds



The warthog's sharp tusks can rip open a dog or a hunter

as a kind of blur, with dust rising above them all. Then the blur changed to specks, and the dust columns rose higher into the air. Then the specks changed into individual forms, some galloping, some quite still, until the whole horizon in our path was full of them. Our point of aim had been perfect. We were due, sudden contrary winds permitting, to go over the very centre of that vast animal concourse.

Alan and Douglas, my companions on the flight, made everything ready with their cameras. I arranged the remaining sacks of sand conveniently at my feet, and promised a stable run over the herd. We were much too involved to be particularly happy, or rather to show that we were; but everything was going exceptionally well. I dropped the height down to less than 200 feet, and the tip of the trail rope began to touch the ground. There was an occasional brief tugging as it went straight over a solitary tree, but the trees were rare and becoming rarer. The herd was in an open place, and there was nothing but a few drying water-holes, the slender traces of dust, and those thousands upon thousands of animals. Meanwhile, for the sun was in the east behind the balloon, our shadow moved steadily ahead of us, and showed the way. It moved over the ground like some giant amoeba, undulating slightly at the edges with the unevenness of the earth, and then pushing out as it climbed up one side of an isolated rise in the ground. It became an exceedingly sensitive form of altimeter, for the eye is good at appreciating whether something is growing or shrinking before it. So I stared at that shadow leading us towards the herd, and threw out sand accordingly, to gain height.

At last we came near, and as we did so an immensity of noise came up towards us. I had listened to that congregation on the ground, but when heard from the air it was far more deafening. The nasal grunts of the wildebeest were strung together so continuously that it sounded as if a swarm of buzzing bees had dropped their note an octave or two. It was a raucous vibration coming from everywhere. It was the real noise of a migration on the move, not the half-hearted imitation of it we had heard when on the ground. It was one mighty impulse. It was a herd, and it was careering, walking, eating, and galloping on its way. It was magnificent.

The shadow cut clean through animals, so to speak, and they disregarded it. The zebras, Thomson's gazelles, Grants and wildebeest were all the same. The sudden blotting out of the sun by the sharpness of our form caused no reaction. We might as well not have been there, but for the fact that we spoke. This made them aware of us. It seemed silly to us, assuming stealth when so blatantly visible, and assuming quiet when the whole earth is pulsing with a remarkable din. So we spoke, more out of enthusiasm than with any intent to say a message; but we did speak, and the animals heard us. The group immediately below frisked up their tails and cantered off in the idiotic heel-kicking manner of the wildebeest. We experimented with other groups. If we were quiet, all was well; but if we talked, we were instantly overheard, despite the din.

Having learnt this lesson, we respected its findings and remained silent. This was easy, for there was plenty to observe and too much to say. The whole sight was so magical. To both sides there were ten miles of animals. To the front of us, and to the back, there were thousands of them. And above them all we floated with the simplicity that only a balloon can possess, provided the air is calm and the African day is young. Of course, it was growing older all the time, and we were soon beginning to realize it. My job was becoming steadily more difficult, and that nice

Anthony Smith, like the hero of Jules Verne's adventure of a hundred years ago, is a scientist who writes for a London daily newspaper. And he had almost as many difficulties to overcome to make his voyage possible. The flight of a balloon is not as sedate as it may appear. A balloon is completely at the mercy of all the down-draughts, aerial waves, and other turbulent freaks of the atmosphere. One minute you are surveying the animals and landscape from a comfortable 200 feet, and the next it is as if you were looking through the wrong end of a telescope at several thousand feet



Masai herdsmen on guard against the first balloon to come their way. Their custom of driving their cattle from one grazing ground to the next is causing an acute problem. There is not enough grazing land for both wild animals and the Masai herds, which can strip the land and turn it into a dust-bowl



THE SPACIOUS SERENGETI



The Serengeti National Park is a plain of nearly 5,000 square miles flattened centuries ago by successive floodings of Lake Victoria, on its western border. The age-old problems of poachers, trophy hunters and disease still exist. The animals, too, are often their own worst enemies, destroying the pasture on which their survival depends. This enormous herd of wildebeest, seen by the balloonists as they glided quietly overhead, forms part of a total population thought to number between 100,000 and 200,000



constant height of 200 feet was becoming exceptional rather than the rule. However, to begin with, this meant only more attention by me, and the general photography and observation was still well under control.

Towards the end of the herd, when its flanks were behind us to the left and right, and when only a few animals remained in front, we were pleased to note that a water-hole was certain to pass directly beneath us. It was nearly dry, but some wildebeest were standing in the mud by its edge, and some others were on the hard, dry, down-trodden earth around it.

'I'll go over this at 200 feet. You just wait and see.'

'Fine,' said Alan. 'It looks well. I'll use up the rest of this magazine on the approach.'

Alan did in fact use up the film, and the approach was at the right height; but then we hit the air above that hot patch. Alan had disappeared into the basket to fix the camera, but Douglas and I watched the ground sink rapidly below, and knew that the gentle hours were over. I read the altimeter casually, knowing only too well what it would say, and saw the needle rise from 200 to 1,500 feet.

From then on the flight did not have its previous serenity. Intermediate landings were frequent, and sand was thrown out several pounds at a time rather than the gentle and occasional trickle of before. However, there was plenty of Serengeti still to come, even after the herd had gone, and we continued the flight, although more erratically. I remember a dead zebra down below, with the vultures swooping in from our height. In a sense we were only seeing things as the vultures had seen them over the centuries. They have watched the life on the plains, and they have always been ready to scavenge them free from death. The vultures used outstretched wings on their effortless way down to the zebra, and only flapped them at the very end. We watched, and then prepared for another intermediate jolt of our own.

Eventually, despite the yearnings to go on, the flight had to come to a stop. Our path through the air had become more and more distorted, and the turbulence increasingly did what it liked with us. I achieved the best I could, but it was plainly not good enough, and at the twentieth unintentional bounce I decided it was time to land. There was no hazard in the way, and the bounces were injuring nothing and no one; but they were extremely tangible tokens of the disturbances to come, and each was harder than the last. Besides, the herd was now behind us and we could imagine no rival that would compete with it. We hit the ground again, having dropped from 300 feet despite volumes of sand, and this time it hurt. The next occasion would definitely have to be the landing.

Douglas and Alan sorted out who would film it, because the man holding the camera needed both hands, and the other man had to hang on to both the operator and the basket so that no one would leave it prematurely. I, meanwhile, prepared the valve and rip lines. I valved a little and down we went.

'It's coming. Hang on. I'm about to rip. Ripping now.' And it came. The basket creaked, but did not even bounce. Slowly it tipped on its side, and slowly we went with it. The coarse grass of the Serengeti brushed against our faces, and the flight was over.



A giraffe, an animal of the wide open spaces. Unlike some other African species, there is no immediate threat to its survival

Flamingoes are one of the 600 or so species of birds found near Lake Manyara. Though gawky on the ground, they are graceful on the wing. The lake, south of the Serengeti National Park, is about thirty miles long by ten wide

Singing round the world

A Welsh poet in his own country, and an English naturalist thousands of miles from home, find that song and dance transcend the barriers of nationality. At the Llangollen Eisteddfod, or at an impromptu gathering in a remote corner of Argentina, nothing matters except the music and the moment

Eisteddfod

DYLAN THOMAS

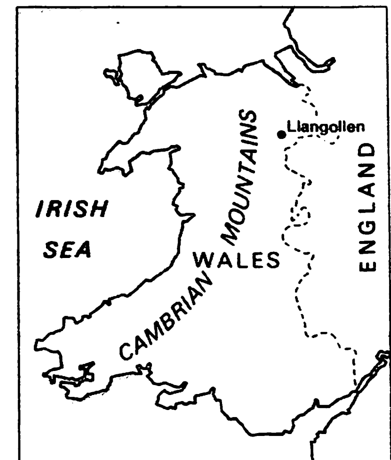
LLANGOLLEN. A town in a vale in rolling green North Wales on a windy July morning. The sun squints out and is puffed back again into the grey clouds blowing, full to the ragged rims with rain, across the Berwyn Hills. The white-horsed River Dee hisses and paws over the hills of its stones and under the greybeard bridge. Wind smacks the river and you, it's a cold, cracking morning; birds hang and rasp over the whipped river, against their will, as though frozen still, or are wind-chaffed and scattered towards the gusty trees. As you drift down Castle Street with your hair flying, or your hat or umbrella dancing to be off and take the sky, you see and hear all about you the decorous, soberly dressed and headgeared, silent and unsmiling inhabitants of the tame town. You could be in any Welsh town on any windy snip of a morning, with only the birds and the river fuming and the only brightness the numberless greens and high purples of the hills. Everything is very ordinary in Llangollen; everything is nicely dull, except the summer world of wind and feathers, leaves and water. There is, if you are deaf, blind, and dumb, with a heart like cold bread pudding, nothing to remark or surprise.

But rub your eyes with your black gloves. Here, over the bridge, come three Javanese, winged, breastplated, helmeted, carrying gongs and steel bubbles. Kilted, sporraned, tartan'd, daggered Scotsmen reel and strathspey up a side-street, piping hot. Burgundian girls, wearing, on their heads, bird-cages made of velvet, suddenly whisk on the pavement into a coloured dance. A Viking goes into a pub. In black felt feathered hats and short leather trousers, enormous Austrians, with thighs big as Welshmen's bodies, but much browner, yodel to fiddles and split the rain with their smiles. Frilled, ribboned, sashed, fezzed, and white-turbaned, in baggy-blue sharavári and squashed red boots, Ukrainians with Manchester accents gopak up the hill. Everything is strange in Llangollen. You wish you had a scarlet hat, and bangles, and a little bagpipe to call your own, but it does not matter. The slapping bell-dancers, the shepherds and chamois-hunters, the fiddlers and fluters, the players on gongs and mandolines, guitars, harps, and trumpets, the beautiful flashing boys and girls of a score and more of singing countries, all the colours of the international rainbow, do not mind at all your mouse-brown moving among them: though you long, all the long Eisteddfod week,

for a cloak like a blue sea or a bonfire to sweep and blaze in the wind, and a cap of bells, and a revelling waistcoat, and a great Alp-horn to blow all over Wales from the ruins of Dinas Brân.

Now follow your nose, and the noise of guitars, and the flying hues and flourish of those big singing-birds in their clogs and aprons and bonnets, veils, flowers, more flowers, and lace, past the wee Shoppes, through the babel of the bridge, by the very white policeman conducting from a rostrum, and up the tide of the hill, past popcorn and raspberryade, to the tented Field.

Green, packed banks run, swarming, down to the huge marquee there that groans and strains and sings in the sudden squalls like an airship crewed full of choirs. Music spills out of the microphones all over the humming field. Out of the wind-tugged tent it rises in one voice, and the crowd outside is hushed away into Spain. In a far corner of the field, young men and women begin to dance, for every reason in the world. Out skims the sun from a cloud-shoal. The spaniel ears of the little tents flap. Children collect the autographs of Dutch farmers. You hear a hive of summer hornets: it is the Burgundian *vielle,* a mandolin with a handle. Palestrina praises from Bologna to the choral picnickers. A Breton holiday sings in the wind, to clog-tramp and *biniou*.



Here they come, to this cup and echo of hills, people who love to make music, from France, Ireland, Norway, Italy, Switzerland, Spain, Java, and Wales: fine singers and faulty, nimble dancers and rusty, pipers to make the dead swirl or chanters with crows in their throats: all countries, shapes, ages, and colours, sword-dancers, court-dancers, cross-dancers, clog-dancers, dale-dancers, morris, ceilidhe, and highland, bolero, flamenco, heel-and-toe. They love to make music move. What a rush of dancing to Llangollen's feet! And, oh, the hubbub of tongues and toes in the dark chapels where every morning there's such a shining noise as you'd think would drive the Sunday bogles out of their doldrums for ever and ever.

Inside the vast marquee that drags at its anchors, 8,000 people—and you—face a sea of flowers, begonias, magnolias, lupins, lobelias, grown for these dancing days in the gardens of the town. Banks and waves of plants and flowers flow to the stage where a company from Holland—eight married pairs of them, the oldest in their late fifties, the youngest twenty or so—are performing, in sombre black, a country dance called 'Throw Your Wife Away'. This is followed, appropriately and a little later, by a dance called 'You Can't Catch Me'. The movements of the humorous and simple dance are gay and sprightly. The men of the company dance like sad British railway-drivers in white clogs. Under their black, peaked caps, their faces are stern, weather-scored, and unrelenting. The quicker the music, the gloomier they clap and clog on the invisible cobbles of cold clean kitchens. The frenzied flute and fiddle whip them up into jet-black bliss as they frolic like undertakers. Long Dutch winter nights envelop them. Brueghel has painted them. They are sober as potatoes. Their lips move as they stamp and bow. Perhaps they are singing. Certainly, they are extremely happy.

And Austrians, then, to fiddles and guitar, sing a song of mowers in the Alpine meadows. Ukrainians with swords leap and kick above the planted sea. People from Tournus, in the Burgundy country, dance to accordion and *cabrette*, the Dance of the Vine-Dressers after Harvest. They plant the vines, put the leaves on the branches, hang up the grapes, pick the grapes, and press the wine. 'God gave

us wine', they sing as they dance, and the wine is poured into glasses and the dancers drink. All day the music goes on. Bell-padded, baldricked, and braided, those other foreigners, the English, dance fiercely out of the past, and some have beards, spade, gold, white, and black, to dance and wag as well.

And a chorus of Spanish ladies are sonorous and beautiful in their nighties.

And little girls from Obernkirchen sing like pigtailed angels.

All day the song and dancing in this transformed valley, this green cup of countries in the country of Wales, goes on until the sun goes in. Then, in the ship of the tent, under the wind-filled sails, watchers and listeners grow slow and close into one cloud of shadow; they gaze, from their deep lulled dark, on to the lighted deck where the country dancers weave in shifting-coloured harvests of light.

And then you climb down hill again, in a tired tide, and over the floodlit Dee to the town that won't sleep for a whole melodious week or, if it does at all, will hear all night in its sleep the hills fiddle and strum and the streets painted with tunes.

The bars are open as though they could not shut and Sunday never come down over the fluting town like a fog or a shutter. For every reason in the world, there's a wave of dancing in the main, loud street. A fiddle at a corner tells you to dance and you do in the moon though you can't dance a step for all the Ukrainians in Llangollen. Peace plays on a concertina in the vigorous, starry street, and nobody is surprised.

When you leave the last voices and measures of the sweet-throated, waltzing streets, the lilt and ripple of the Dee leaping, and the light of the night, to lie down, and the strewn town lies down to sleep in its hills and ring of echoes, you will remember that nobody was surprised at the turn the town took and the life it danced for one week of the long, little year. The town sang and danced, as though it were right and proper as the rainbow or the rare sun to celebrate the old bright turning earth and its bullied people. Are you surprised that people still can dance and sing in a world on its head? The only surprising thing about miracles, however small, is that they sometimes happen.

Asado

GERALD DURRELL

I WAS TALKING to Luna, a friend from the town of Oran, in the north-west corner of Argentina.

'Because we are leaving tomorrow for Calilegua,' he said, 'my friends have made an *asado* in your honour, Gerry. They will play and sing only very old Argentine folk-songs, so that you may record them on your machine. You like this idea?'

'There is nothing I like better than an *asado*,' I said, 'and an *asado* with folk-songs is my idea of Heaven.'

So, at about ten o'clock that evening, a friend of Luna's picked us up in his car and drove us out to the estate, some distance outside Oran, where the *asado* had been organized. The *asado* ground was a grove near the *estancia*, an area of bare earth that told of many past dances, surrounded by whispering eucalyptus trees and massive oleander bushes. The long wooden benches and trestle-tables were lit with

the soft yellow glow of half a dozen oil-lamps, and outside this buttercup circle of light the moonlight was silver brilliant. There were about fifty people there, many of whom I had never met, and few of them over the age of twenty. They greeted us uproariously, almost dragged us to the trestle-tables which were groaning under the weight of food, and placed great hunks of steak, crisp and sizzling from the open fires, in front of us. The wine-bottles passed with monotonous regularity, and within half an hour Luna and I were thoroughly in the party spirit, full of good food, warmed with red wine.

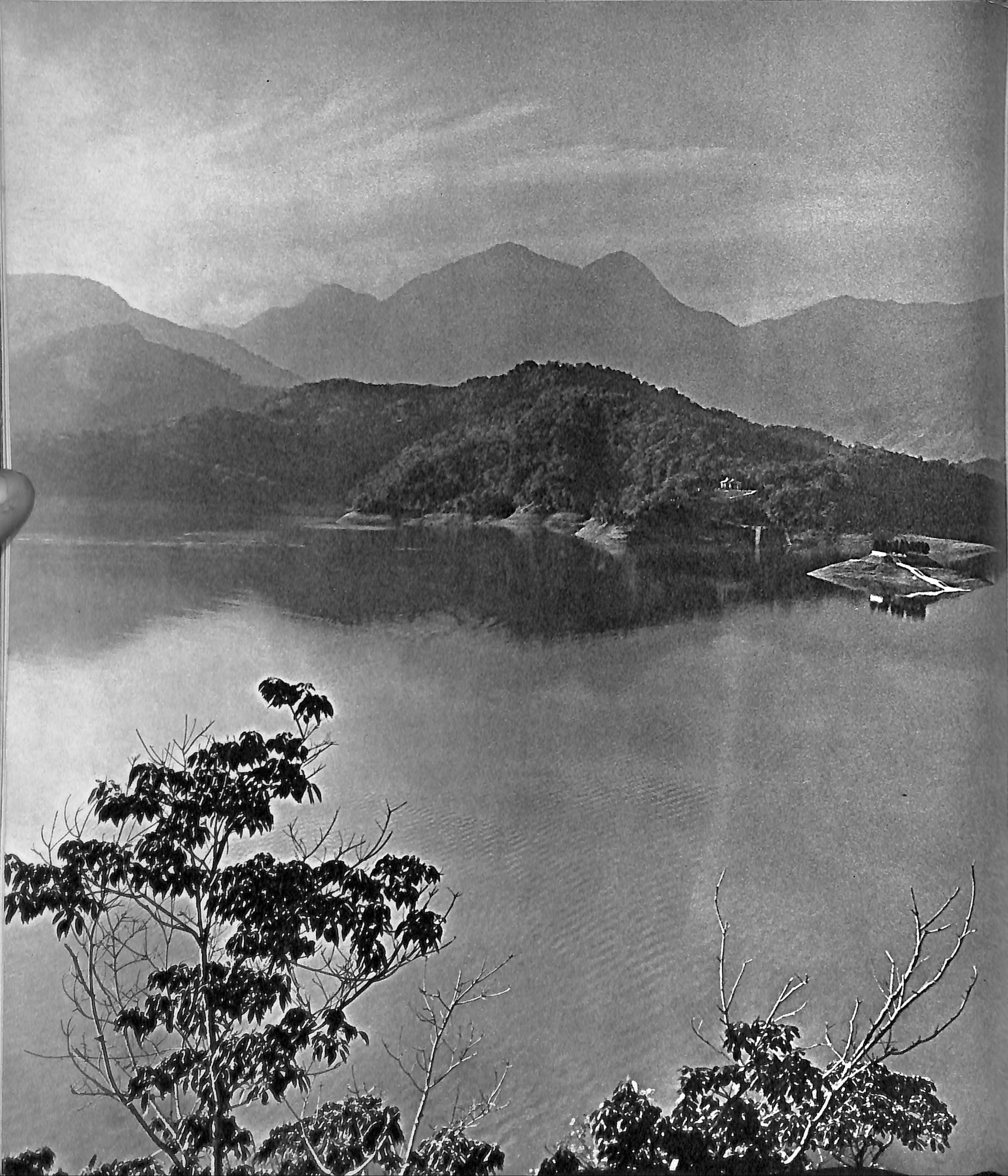
Then these gay, pleasant young people gathered round while I got the tape recorder ready, watching with absorbed attention the mysteries of threading tape and getting levels. When, at last, I told them I was ready, guitars, drums and flutes appeared as if by magic, and the entire crowd burst into song. They sang and sang, and each time they came to the end of a song, someone would think of a new one, and they would start again. Sometimes a shy, grinning youth would be pushed to the front of the circle as the only person there capable of rendering a certain number, and after much encouragement and shouts of acclamation he would sing. Then it would be a girl's turn to sing the solo refrain in a sweet-sour voice, while the lamps glinted on her dark hair, and the guitars shuddered and trembled under the swiftly-moving brown fingers of their owners. They danced in a row on a flagstoned path, their spurs ringing sparks from the stone, so that I could record the heel-taps which are such an intricate part of the rhythm of some of their songs; they danced the delightful handkerchief dance with its pleasant lilting tune, and they danced tangos that made you wonder if the stiff, sexless dance called by that name in Europe was a member of the same family.



Then, shouting with laughter because my tapes had run out and I was in despair, they rushed me to the table, plied me with more food and wine, and sitting round me sang more sweetly than ever. These, I say again, were mostly teenagers, revelling in the old and beautiful songs of their country, and the old and beautiful dances, their faces flushed with delight at my delight, honouring a stranger they had never seen before and would probably never see again.

By now they had reached the peak. Slowly they started to relax, the songs getting softer and softer, more and more plaintive, until we all reached the moment when we knew the party was over, and that to continue it longer would be a mistake. They had sung themselves from the heavens back to earth, like a flock of descending larks. Flushed, bright-eyed, happy, our young hosts insisted that we travelled back to Oran with them in the big open back of the lorry in which they had come. We piled in, our tightly-packed bodies creating a warmth for which we were grateful, for the night air was now chilly. Then as the lorry roared off down the road to Oran, bottles of red wine were passed carefully from hand to hand, and the guitarists started strumming. Everybody, revived by the cool night air, took up the refrain, and we roared along through the velvet night like a heavenly choir.

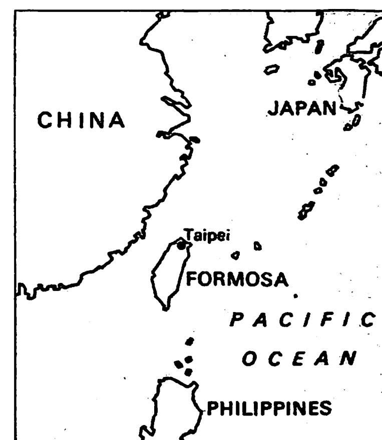
I looked up and saw the giant bamboos that curved over the road, now illuminated by the lorry's headlights. They looked like the talons of some immense green dragon, curved over the road, ready to pounce if we stopped singing for an instant. Then a bottle of wine was thrust into my hand, and as I tipped my head back to drink I saw that the dragon had passed, and the moon stared down at me, white as a mushroom-top against the dark sky.



JOHN SLIMMING

Trishaws and mountains

A new resident of Formosa looks at his adopted home. In the colourful clatter of a modern city and the peaceful beauty of the hills around it he finds the subtle fascination that has lured Dutch, Spanish and French invaders down the centuries, and led the Portuguese to call it 'Ilha formosa'—the beautiful island



When we first arrived in Taipei, the capital of Formosa, we lived for a week in a Chinese hotel, restlessly in the June heat, awake at night, disturbed by the shriek of trains close by. After two days of house-hunting Peksee, my wife, helped by a Cantonese trishaw driver, found a house for us, and we moved in late one evening.

In the street were lighted food stalls, lamplit barrows of fruit, water melons, bananas, oranges; and the street was filled with trishaws (tricycle rickshaws), bicycles and carts, and a crowd of boisterous people, shouting and laughing. A taxi brought us from the hotel to the house and we stood inside the front door in the warm emptiness, surrounded by suitcases. That night we slept on matting, uncovered, undressed, cool in the warm dark.

It is an old-fashioned house, built during the Japanese occupation of the island, before the Chinese returned here from the Mainland after the war. Squat, single-storeyed, the walls are of wood and white plaster; beams of smooth polished cherry support the panels of the ceiling. One whole side of my room is of sliding doors which open out into the walled garden; the thick, wide eaves of the tiled roof jut out over the steps which lead down to a penny-sized lawn.

Years ago the house was on the edge of a village, beyond the outskirts of Taipei, and there was an unbroken view across the flat rice fields to Grass Mountain and the hills in the north. The roads were unpaved then and a network of paths led into them from the fields. Now Taipei has grown larger, sprawling out across the rice fields and absorbing the village. The roads have been widened and paved, and you can see Grass Mountain only through gaps between the houses, blue-brown and purple, bruised by the wind.

Taipei is in the north of the island. There is no wall round the city now—only the gates are left; great piles of blocked stones, with rounded archways and Chinese roofs. The wall was pulled down by the Japanese as the city grew beyond it. Cupped by hills, the houses are packed together on the flat land and a confusion of architecture marks the town's growth, like year rings through a cross-cut oak.

The most attractive part of the island, scenically, is the ridge of high ground which

The placid waters of Sun Moon Lake, 2,500 feet up in the hills near Taichung and one of the beauty spots of Formosa. Over seventy peaks on the island are more than 10,000 feet high

runs through its centre. Now, the tracks through the hills are blocked by snow and the trails are impassable. With the thaw will come landslides, changing the route of the paths, and we will still need to wait longer. What was in the beginning no more than a curious wish to see these mountains has become a stubborn determination to stay on here until we have climbed through them. Each morning I watch the hills which circle Taipei as though they could indicate the condition of the higher ground to the south, of the wild aborigine country which spans the main width of the island.

The circle of hills is constantly changing colour: dove grey and green; smoke grey, ash and apple jade under an eggshell sky; copper and rust brown; plum-coloured and violet; orchid blue, dark smudged with charcoal. The clouds press down on the tops of the hills, changing the shape of the skyline, hazing it sometimes so that it fades into the sky with no clear division at all, pearl-coloured and misty. During the summer the rough slopes were burned by the sun, the trees were golden and, above them, the air rippled and tremored in the heat. Yesterday there was frost on the crests of the ridges—a dusting of powdered ice on the mountains; the early sun was orange-yellow like a yolk and there was a thin wafer of ice on a water barrel outside in the garden. Peksee is excited by the colour and movement and her enthusiasm is infectious. We spent three hours yesterday taking photographs in the city, trying to trace the foundations of the old wall. Sometimes, even now, you can find parts of it remaining.

We wait for the thaw and for the warmer weather. We walk in the hills near Grass Mountain. We walk along the footpath which follows the river bank. We take photographs sometimes, on the waterfront or near the boat-builders' yards. We travel across town in a trishaw, watching this city in which we live.

A trishaw moves at a leisurely pace, to the side of the road, away from the centre swirl of traffic. The shops are square pillared to the pavement, open-fronted, and from a trishaw you can see into them as you pass, unhurriedly. The shop signs, with bold Chinese calligraphy, are vertical on wooden boards, black on white, white on red, gold on blue. A tinsmith hammers at a pail, and columns of buckets are piled in the shadows behind him; a pottery shop, with straw-dusty bowls and plates stacked outside on the pavement; a carpenter is using a plane, and curls of new wood litter about his feet like lengths of crisp apple peel; a furniture shop with tables and stools of unseasoned timber; a cigarette stall, backed by a brick pillar; a food shop with smoked duck and smoked fish, head high on hooks, with pigs' feet, pressed duck, pressed chicken and small bundles of ducks' tongues, dry-bunched like weeds; a barber and a pork butcher together, both sharing the same doorway; a shop selling tea, with shelved rows of tea, red-labelled, in glass jars; a shoemaker on the pavement, screened by an awning of hessian, hunched forward, stitching, a shoe gripped between his knees; a vegetable market, crowded and noisy with women; a man carrying three fish, trout-sized, unwrapped, laced through the gills with string; a small child in cotton padded trousers, with the seat cut away for convenience, leaving his small bottom bare, blue shrunk with cold.

The smells of the street: the pungent smell of food, peppery, spiced and seasoned; the clean smell of sawn wood; the sharp smell of lacquer and leather, of

River scene at Taipei, the capital of Formosa. Until the modern network of roads was built the rivers carried most of the island's goods traffic





oil and traffic. A thin, occasional waft of incense and the momentary scent of burning joss. The confused smells of vegetables and refuse and dust and crushed fruit, trampled on by water buffaloes; the keen smell of a charcoal fire, of wood smoke and smouldering leaves. The street is stone grey behind the shop signs but there is colour everywhere. The flutter of coloured paper over the lintels of the doors; a Chinese flag shaking in the wind; the gleam of a candle, through an open doorway, burning near a dark altar; a narrow side alley, unreached by the sun, and a girl in a bright dress calling to another; a child laughing as it whips a red top, a pinpoint of colour on a washed flagstone, and beyond the alley, the glint of sunlight on newly ploughed rice fields.

The traffic is heavy and hazardous; taxis and cars, silver and blue buses, exhaust fumes and lorries, bicycles, truck-loads of fish spilling crushed ice into the dust, bicycle bells and horns, the screech of cart axles, trishaws and cycles. Parts of Taipei could be mistaken for any Chinese city in South-east Asia. Chung-cheng Road could be in Hong Kong or Kowloon, Kuala Lumpur or Singapore. The Chinese scene is familiar but the dialect is not, so that I have the feeling sometimes of watching a motion picture of known places, dubbed in a foreign tongue.

This morning on my way to Lung Shan, the hanging barrier at the railway level crossing was lowered and we waited in the cold. The trishaw driver pulled down the ear flaps of his hat. A bullock pushed underneath the swinging bars and ambled across in front of the train; a diesel passed by, rush-screaming out of town, and behind it, after it had gone, small whirlwinds of dust spiralled at the side of the track.

It is only half an hour by bus from Taipei to Yangmingshan—the Grass Mountain. In the summer we went there often to get away from the oily heat of the city. Then the view from the road was magnificent. Sharp craggy mountains glared yellow and green-brown in the sun, the hills were fat and swollen; below and beyond them, blurred by the heat, was a chequered pattern of green paddy fields with a sparkle of sunlight on the river. The large well-kept park in the hills had flowering trees and shrubs, swept paths and clipped lawns. The startling silver of a waterfall surprised with its suddenness and crystal spray splashed the green ferns. There was a pond, filled with gold and red fish and huge blue carp longer than my arm—plump, well-fed, lazy creatures. They moved through the tepid water like toy submarines, slowly in formation, and Peksee used to feed them with broken biscuit.

In the summer many people went to Yangmingshan from Taipei. They jostled together in the sticky heat, their cotton clothes no longer crisp-fresh but limp and damp. They sweltered under the burning sun, crowding the paths and overflowing onto the lawns, sitting in shady places under the palms, sprawling on the scratchy grass. There was not enough breeze to stir the waste paper they littered about.

It was cooler in the evenings after a day on the mountain, but as we came down the hill in the bus, rattling and jolting back to Taipei, the heat used to swirl up at us like steam; it got hotter with every furlong. The heavy blue darkness pressed down onto the plains; the bus was a little mobile oven. From the bridge at the end of Chung-shan Road, looking back towards the hills, Grass Mountain used to

A patchwork of paddy fields. In the rainy, sub-tropical climate as many as three rice crops can be grown a year in some areas

Most of Formosa's population of nearly 13 million work on the land. The main crops are rice, sugar cane, tea and citrus fruit, and there is a flourishing livestock industry. There are also great areas of valuable timber, and the island is the world's largest producer of camphor wood and camphor oil. Since the Chinese Nationalists began their land reform programme in 1953, the number of farmers who own their land has risen to eighty-five per cent. An estimated 2 million Chinese followed Chiang Kai-shek from the Mainland after he fled to Formosa in 1949; minority groups include about 200,000 aborigines of Malayan stock



A peasant boy wears heavy woven rainwear to keep off the island's frequent downpours. Rainfall varies from fifty to 250 inches a year, depending on the region, and Pacific typhoons occur during spring and early autumn. The electricity pylon in the background indicates the steady growth of industrial production, which includes chemicals, textiles and food processing





appear distorted by the heat, dark and formless, the crest gleaming like coal. In the summer even the stars seemed warm; ochre and dandelion, flax yellow and chrome, they prickled the night sky.

In the winter it is cold on Yangmingshan; grey and silver, green-grey and cinnamon, with a pale winter sky washed thinly with blue, the clouds are like skeins of grey wool drawn out across the tops of the mountains. In the distance the plains are smoky and pearl-coloured with the shining thread of the river twisting through the haze. It is cold in the park, with a raw wind and wafers of ice floating on the pond like panes of broken glass. The fish keep close together, quite still in the clear water, mouthing. The waterfall clatters like falling stones, a cascade of cold wet crystals falling onto clean rocks. The camellias, unscented and sterile, tremble like flowers of frozen wax. In the winter the park is empty except for a gardener, alone on the hillside. He works with a rake and he stops sometimes to blow on his fingers.

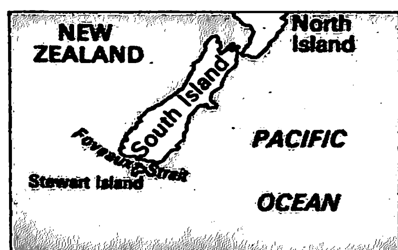
In a few weeks' time Yangmingshan will be different again. It will be warmer, the blossoms will be in bloom—the cherry trees, the plums and the peaches—new winds will shake the branches and a snowstorm of pale petals will swirl across the lawns. The park will have changed once more and people will go back to it, and see.

A trader selling bowls of steaming rice in the New Park, Taipei. Taipei has a population of well over a million, and is situated at the northern end of the island. Formosa's children receive free education between the ages of six and twelve, and literacy is now almost universal

TEMPLE SUTHERLAND

Muttonbirders' voyage

An April voyage to the Muttonbird Islands is the highlight of the year for many Maoris of southern New Zealand. There they catch the young sooty shearwaters or muttonbirds, which are preserved and eaten as a delicacy. For the Maoris muttonbirding means good food, a holiday—and an income



THE MUTTONBIRD or sooty shearwater has occupied an important place in Maori life since prehistoric times,and many a *pakeha*—the Maori word for a white man—has come to relish the muttonbird not only as a food but as a delicacy. The preserved young birds with their oily, semi-filleted bodies and spindly drumsticks appear in most fish-shop windows the country over. A bird of two hemispheres, the sooty shearwater breeds in New Zealand waters. It is particularly plentiful about the islands of Foveaux Strait and those off Stewart Island, at the extreme south of New Zealand.

Towards the end of September the birds begin to arrive. They come in their millions, and before long adult muttonbirds are tidying up last year's burrow, a tunnel of from one to four feet, at the end of which is the breeding chamber with its rough nest of leaves and stalks. The hen bird lays a single egg, and at length the chick emerges, clad in a thick coat of grey down. Within a few days of its hatching the nestling is left very much to its own devices by its parents. They return every few nights to give it a meal by regurgitation—a blow-out of fish oil which may sometimes be of greater weight than the recipient itself.

The chick puts on weight fast and, if the season is a good one, soon becomes a little tub of fat. It lives a stay-at-home existence until near fledging time, when it begins to venture out a little, usually at night, to stretch and get the feel of its wings. This exercise leads at length to the young bird taking to the air to join the great family of wanderers, destined to roam the oceans until with the return of spring to the Southern Hemisphere, New Zealand sees the apparently endless stream of returning muttonbirds begin to flow again.

Southland's original Maori settlers are said to have been people who came from the north on warlike missions and liked the place so much that they could not bring themselves to leave it. Even in those days it was a land of plenty. The sea was teeming with fish; seals were abundant, and the bush was full of birds. To the islands offshore came in season the shearwaters and other seabirds, assuring a bounteous supply of winter food. Tribal and family rights became effective over the various muttonbird islands, and when Stewart Island was ceded to the Crown in 1864, certain islands were reserved for the taking of birds. Definite localities

were assigned to different owners, and these rights have been exercised by succeeding generations of the original families ever since, the rights being extended to those who marry into the beneficiary families, whether they are Maori or *pakeha*.

Muttonbirding commences on April 1 and continues until mid-May. During that period a total of somewhere between 200,000 and 300,000 young birds are taken from their burrows or, later in the season, grabbed by torchlight at the burrow mouth on dark or overcast nights. The young muttonbird is killed on the spot; later in the day it is plucked and, in most cases, partly filleted to simplify packing.

The Maoris have several methods of preserving muttonbirds. Many are salted and packed tightly into bags made from the local seaweed, or into tins. Others are cooked and preserved in their own fat. With proper care the birds will keep for two or three years. But, of course, 'birding isn't everyone's idea of an enjoyable autumn interlude. Muttonbirds have a peculiar smell with a pervading quality. It isn't easy work, and living conditions on the islands can be hard and lacking in most home comforts. However, good money can be made at muttonbirding nowadays. A skilled and hardworking 'birder can knock out a cheque of several hundred pounds in the six-weeks' season, apart from setting himself and his family up with a larder full of luxury.

I reached the wharf early one morning, and found that there was hardly room to breathe along the berth of the *Wairua*. Almost all the room was taken up with 'birders' supplies and equipment, stacked high above the wharf. Bundles of fresh-cut poles from the *manuka* bush, bundles of flax, four-gallon tins and boxes to protect them, spuds, stoves, scantling, tucker and tarpaulins; and, almost as important as tucker to the music-loving Maori, radios, banjos and ukuleles. Roofing iron, bedding rolls, kerosene and condensed milk, pumpkins, gramophones, and a sheep. And then there were the tins: hundreds of shiny new tins, stacked or bundled, awaiting stowing.

Loading was already in full swing, the 'birders doing their own stevedoring under supervision by the ship's officers. A human chain was delivering goods and chattels from the heaps to the vessel's slings. A picnic spirit was abroad.

Trucks and taxis were arriving with more 'birders. Old acquaintances, some from widely separated parts of the country, were meeting and greeting in the warm-hearted Maori way. Maori children roamed the wharf in bands. Sitting on a packing case outside the wharf office was an old Maori granny, acting as sheet anchor and home base for the smallest of them.

I had morning tea on board with the captain and some of his crew. A much less light-hearted atmosphere prevailed here. For them the run south with the 'birders was no picnic, I imagined. There would be a lot of work and responsibility for people whose job was to see that scores of boatloads of men, women and children, together with tons of gear, were put safely ashore on remote island beaches, some of which have little or no shelter. Everything depended on the weather. If favourable weather held, the landings could be made in a few days. In bad weather it might take weeks. And taking the 'birders down was only the first half of the annual assignment. In a couple of months' time the *Wairua* would go down again to pick them up and bring them and their birds home again. On that voyage the cargo would be almost entirely muttonbirds, ton upon ton of them, filling the hold and perhaps the deck spaces as well. I gathered that, though the scuppers may not



An adult muttonbird. Muttonbirds arrive in New Zealand to breed towards the end of September, and by the beginning of April the young birds are ready to be taken. An observer has described the landing of muttonbirds as 'like the pounding of large-size hail on the ground. The air is alive with muttonbirds twisting and turning in all directions.' They migrate from the western coast of America to New Zealand to breed, and return north at the end of the southern summer

literally run with muttonbird oil on the homeward journey, a person on the wharf would know where the ship had come from without glancing at it. And then came the job of getting the old lady spick and span for the passenger run.

Wandering about in the thick of the bustle without any thought of safety was the littlest 'birder of them all, a Maori girl of three or four. She had recently arrived with her party, stepping daintily from her taxi, crisp and doll-like in a smart check coat and bonnet. Now she had been changed into knockabout clothes, denim bib overalls, and looked daintier still. She roamed in a world of her own, a world of scurrying feet and legs in which she was visited from time to time by a mongrel dog that was much less sure of its right to be there and was glad of her reassurance. I went over to where three boys were in a huddle round a bollard. The eldest was about ten, the youngest eight. Both the older boys had been down to the island before, but the youngest, a serious-faced little chap, was going for the first time. The veterans were discussing prospects for the season.

'It took eighteen boatloads to put all our mob ashore last year. That was the most boatloads anyone had.' The eldest of the trio was plainly proud of this family record.

I enquired how they got on about school down there.

'We're supposed to take a bit of school down with us. A coupla books.'

'Yeah, but we don't do much school—we don't get any time. Mostly we're flat out working—chopping legs and giving a hand to pluck.' It was the grandest excuse for dodging school work that ever a boy was blessed with.

Just as the *Wairua* was casting off that afternoon the hiding sun blazed forth. It was a stirring scene—last-minute advice and farewells, the last laughs and wise-cracks. One of the happy school-dodgers waved to us with his hat. There was a typical gesture of Maori ebullience and generosity when a departing 'birder pulled from his pocket a handful of loose change and sent it shoreward in a shower to the children on the wharf. The *Wairua* slid swiftly astern, turned out into the harbour, and was soon out of sight. The muttonbirders were off for yet another season.

Later that day I had a long yarn with an old Maori who had been a 'birder every year since he could remember. He was off again in a few days, travelling in the family's boat. When I expressed surprise at the number of children that had sailed on the *Wairua* the old man smiled.

'I've seen many more set off than that,' he told me. 'A hundred and fifty adult 'birders and between forty and fifty kids was the usual thing a year or two ago, but there's more parties travelling down privately today, and there's not the crush there used to be. It's a wonderful time for the youngsters,' he went on. 'It's a hard life but it's healthy. I've seen kids leave here that were barely fit to travel—generally run down and off their tucker—but never in all my days have I seen a kid that was ailing when it came back. They're fit as buck rats when the season's over. It's a wonderful experience for a youngster.'

He was a little wistful about the changes in the pattern of muttonbirding since he first remembered it. Tins had largely replaced the old-time *poha* preserving bags which had not only performed a most satisfactory service but had given a 'birder and his family some handiwork to do in which they could take pride. The seaweed, called bull kelp by the *pakeha,* would be harvested in advance, and the



A young muttonbird. The eggs are laid at the end of November and early in December; both parents take part in incubation. The chicks hatch mainly towards the end of January, and about three months later are ready to leave their burrows and fly north across the ocean

thallus segments would be split open to form an envelope. These were inflated, air-cured, and put in a cool place to become pliant again. When the time came the bags were stacked tight with as many birds as could be squeezed in and tied firmly round the necks, so that the containers could be turned upside down to allow the brine to percolate without escaping. There was a utilitarian model, and an artistic model on which you could do a job that really appealed to the eye. The bags of birds were protected by a sheathing of bark. Handles of twine might be interwoven with the flax to form distinctive patterns in the weave. These were a 'birder's trade marks as well as proof of his ownership. The number of birds in each bag could be told at a glance by the knots in a certain end of flax, a large knot denoting each ten and a smaller one each unit.

Age-old craftsmanship had also gone into the making of the torches for the 'birding expeditions at night in the latter weeks of the season. A popular design was made from *tataki* grass and *totara* bark, heavily impregnated with muttonbird fat. Now it was chiefly four-gallon tins and electric torches. Practical innovations were increasing every year, but something of the spirit of the old 'birding days was missing now, he said. It had been a lot more fun when the old customs and practices had been strictly adhered to.

Late the same evening I travelled my last mile south, to the end of the road that runs just beyond Stirling Point. It was a glorious evening. I looked south into the deep purple of nightfall over the ocean. A large vessel of the overseas meat trade glided silently past. Out in the strait the lighthouse had begun work for the night. The muttonbirders were still very much in my thoughts. Some parties might even be ashore now, because the sea was moderate. And that dainty mite, the littlest 'birder, where was she? At Big Island, perhaps, or Murderer's Cove? Worn out with the day's excitements and curled up somewhere within the sound of the surf gently breaking on a beach, where the canoes of her ancestors had grounded in the 'birding days of past centuries.

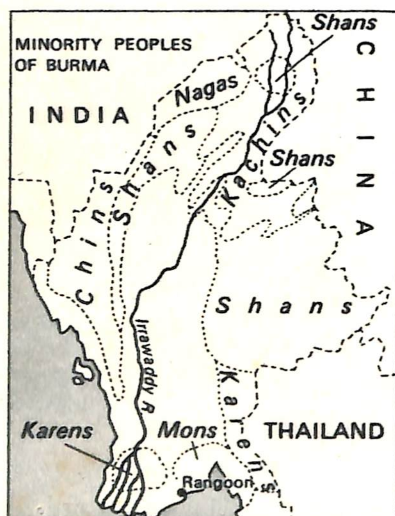


A Maori takes a muttonbird chick from its burrow. Burrows from one to four feet long lead to breeding chambers, containing nests made from leaves and stalks. If the Maori cannot reach the nest with his arm, he digs a hole above the breeding chamber, removes the muttonbird, and replaces the turf for the next year's nest. Muttonbirds are also enticed out of their burrows at night by torches

STEWART WAVELL

Peoples of pagoda-land

The Burmese are renowned for their gaiety, bright clothes, hospitality and love of festivals. Equally colourful are the many races who live in the horseshoe of hills surrounding the central plain of Burma. They have their own languages and music, their own memories of civilizations long since vanished





The head-dress of a Naga warrior is made from a bear's fur, a hornbill's feather, and the tusks of a boar

IN THE HILLS of Burma, far from the golden pagodas and bustling urban life of Rangoon and Mandalay, live peoples whose origins go far back into the unknown history of South-east Asia. Among the most impressive to look at are the Nagas, gifted as warriors but light-hearted in peace, with a love of music, festivities and tribal dances. They live in the remote mountains of north-west Burma.

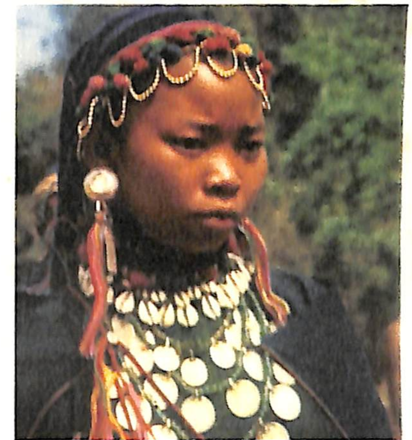
Many of the tribes migrated from the north in the Middle Ages or earlier, when pressure from Chinese expansion grew too heavy for their comfort. This was the fate of the Shans—like the Burmese themselves, a happy, pleasure-loving people. They mostly live on the 5,000-foot plateau in north-east Burma known as the Shan States. The Shans have their own history and literature; they came down into Burma in about the ninth century from Nanchao, in southern China.

The Shan Hills are the home of many other tribes. There are the Kayah, hard-working farmers; the graceful Padaung, whose women stretch their necks with brass rings; and the Wa, notorious in past years for head-hunting. The Ekaw men make good stonemasons. The name 'Ekaw' denotes wild people, and was the unflattering name given them by the Burmese; they call themselves the Aka. In this region live the tough Yimbaw, who make their homes near the jungle.

From the northern hills come the people popularly known as the Kachins. Like Ekaw, Kachin is a derogatory term. The Kachins refer to themselves as the Jinghpaw. They claim to have come some 1,200 years ago from the source of the Irrawaddy, high in the snow-covered mountains of Tibet.

Among the estimated 130 different races that inhabit Burma are the Arakanese people, who live along the western coast, and still have memories of the medieval seafaring kingdom of Mrauk-U. In the south and south-east are the Christian Karens and Mons. The Mons were the great educators of South-east Asia: they taught architecture and Buddhism to the Thais, the Khmers of Angkor and the Burmese. It was their scholarship, craftsmanship and dedication which helped their Burmese conquerors nearly 1,000 years ago to build the magnificent city of Pagan, whose remains are comparable with those of Angkor.

An old Meru Kachin woman by the road near the Chinese border. Only the older people still dress like this as a matter of course. The younger people keep their costume for festive occasions only



A Yimbaw girl singer in the State of Kayah, on the Shan plateau



An Aka girl from the eastern hills near the Laotian border



A Jinghpaw graduate of Rangoon University wearing her silver finery

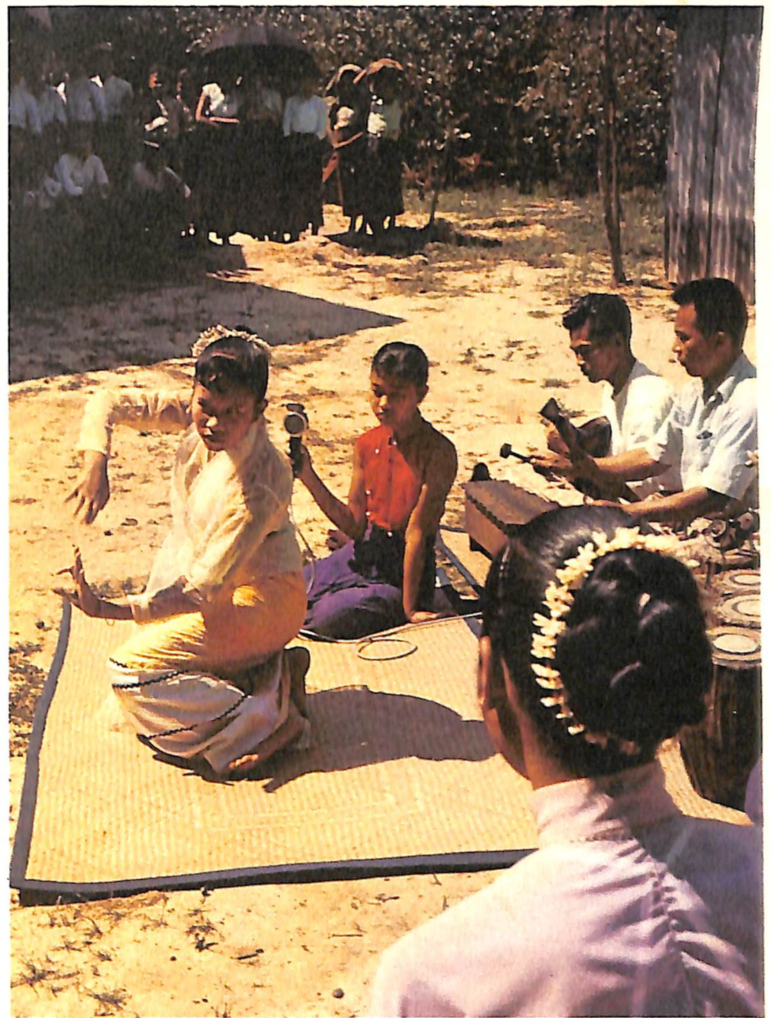
The ancient glories of Burmese music



A classical Mon orchestra plays music more than 1,000 years old. The three-stringed instrument in the foreground is a 'crocodile'—one of the few still played. This orchestra is playing at Zingyaik, near the old Mon capital of Thaton

Padaung girls sing to the accompaniment of pipes. The brass rings round their necks are an aid to beauty, and are claimed to protect against tigers, which are said to be discouraged when they break their teeth on the rings



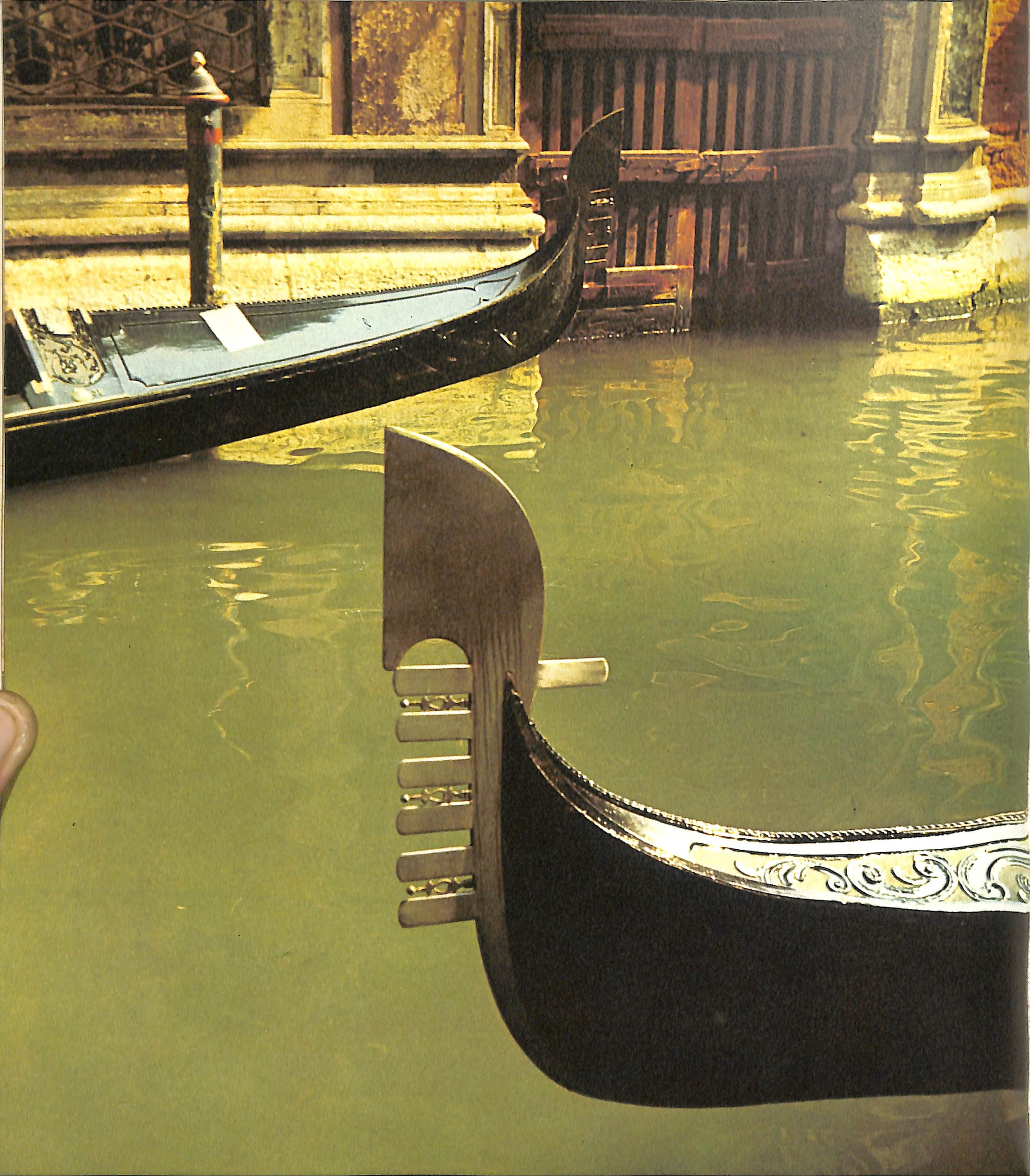


In song and dance the Mons re-enact the history of their race. These Mons, on the island of Chaungzon across the water from Moulmein, are recalling the foundation of the kingdom of Pegu





A student of the Mandalay School of Fine Arts practises the Burmese harp. Gracefully shaped like a boat, it has thirteen strings and is one of the oldest instruments known in Burma

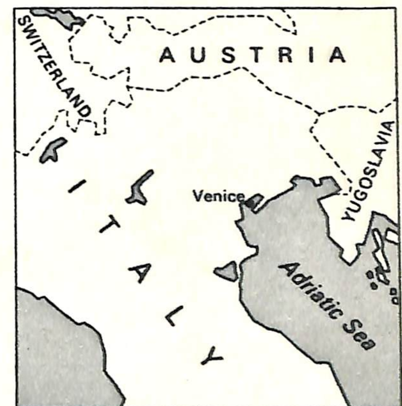


JAMES MORRIS

The gliding gondola

Fast, strong and perfectly shaped, the gondola embodies all the water-borne magic of Venice. And the agile, singing gondolier has for centuries been a central part of the Venetian legend, transporting sober citizens about their business, or lovers to their secret assignations

THE GONDOLA is so intimately adapted to the nature of Venice that it is difficult to imagine the city without it. The origin of the craft is said to be Turkish, and certainly there is something about its grace and lofty pose that smacks of the Golden Horn, seraglios and odalisques and scented pashas. It is also clearly related to the boats of Malta. What the word 'gondola' means nobody knows. In the modern world it has had only three applications: to a kind of American railway wagon; to the under-slung cabin of an airship; to the town carriage of the Venetians.



The gondola is built only in the boatyards of Venice, squeezed away in smoke and litter in the back-canals of the city (some of them will also make you, if you pay them well, exquisite and exact miniatures of the craft). It is constructed of several different woods—oak, walnut, cherry, elm or pine—and is cut to a pernickety design, perfected at last through innumerable modifications. The first gondola was a much less spirited craft, if we can go by the old woodcuts, its form governed by the clumsy practice of boarding it over the bows: the present model has been so exactly adapted to the needs of the city that there are said to be only two places, even at the lowest tide, where a gondola cannot pass—one near the Fenice Theatre, the other near the church of San Stae.

The gondola is immensely strong. An adventurous eccentric once sailed in one to Trieste, rowed by a crew of eight. I have seen a gondola with its bows chopped clean off in a collision, still confidently afloat; I have seen one, salvaged after months under water, restored to gleaming perfection in a few days; and if ever you have your gondola towed by a motor-boat, and race across the lagoon with its prow hoisted high and the salt foam racing by you, the violent but harmless slapping of the water on the boat's belly will tell you how soundly it is built, like an old Victorian railway engine, or a grandfather clock.

The gondola can also be fast. I once found it extremely difficult, in my outboard motor-boat, to keep up with a gondola practising for a regatta beyond San Giorgio. Two gondoliers will effortlessly take a pair of passengers from Venice to Burano, a good six miles, in less than two hours. With a load of four talkative tourists, and

The key-like pattern at the prow of a gondola is the *ferro*: the steel balances the weight of the gondolier in the stern. Gondoliers generally agree that the forward-facing prongs represent the six districts of Venice

an unhurried gondolier, the gondola easily keeps up with a man walking along a canal bank in the city.

The modern gondola does not often have the *felze,* the little black cabin that used, in poetical eyes anyway, so to intensify its air of suggestive gloom: but it is still thickly carpeted, and fitted with brass sea-horses, cushioned seats, coloured oars and a heavy layer of shiny black varnish—gondolas have been black since the sixteenth century, though you may sometimes see one painted a bright blue or a screaming yellow for a regatta. All gondolas are the same, except some rather bigger versions for the fixed ferry runs, and a small toy-like model for racing. Their measurements are standard—length thirty-six feet, beam five feet. They are deliberately lop-sided, to counter the weight of the one-oared rower at the stern, so that if you draw an imaginary line down the centre of the boat, one half is bigger than the other. They have no keel, and they weigh about 1,300 pounds apiece.



Striped jerseys are still worn by gondoliers, but straw hats, for the younger men at least, are going out of favour. An hour's gondola trip costs about £2; serenading is extra

At the prow is the *ferro,* a steel device, often made in the hill-towns of Cadore, with six prongs facing forwards, one prong astern, and a trumpet-like blade above. Most people find this emblem infinitely romantic, but nobody really knows what it represents. Some say it is descended from the prows of Roman galleons. Some say it is a judicial axe. Others believe it to reproduce the symbol of a key that appeared on Egyptian funerary boats. The gondoliers themselves have homelier theories. They seem generally agreed that the six forward prongs represent the six districts of Venice, but disagree wildly about the rest. The top is a Doge's hat—a Venetian halberd—a lily—the sea—the Rialto bridge. The rear prong is the Piazza—Guidecca—the Doge's Palace—Cyprus. The strip of metal running down the stem of the boat is sometimes interpreted as the Grand Canal and sometimes as the History of Venice.

Now and then, too, in the Venetian manner, a *ferro* has only five forward prongs instead of six, and this necessitates an agonizing reassessment of the whole problem: and if you ever do settle the symbolism of the thing, you still have to decide its purpose—whether it is for gauging the heights of bridges, whether it balances the boat, or whether it is merely ornamental. All in all, the *ferro* of a gondola is a controversial emblem: but few sights in Venice are more strangely suggestive than seven or eight of these ancient talismans, curved, rampant and gleaming, riding side by side through the lamplight of the Grand Canal.

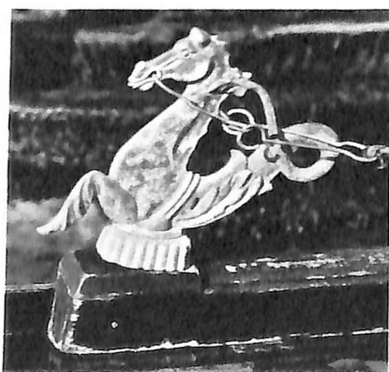
A gondola costs about 500,000 lire—say £300—payable in instalments; and every three weeks or so in summer it must go back to the yards to be scraped of weed and tarred again. Since the gondoliers are largely unemployed in the winter months, fares are necessarily high, and every now and then the Gondoliers' Co-operative announces, in a spate of emotional posters, the impending disappearance of the very last gondola from the canals of Venice, unless the municipality agrees to raise the tariff again. In the sixteenth century there were 10,000 gondolas in Venice. Today there are about 400; but since a ride in one is a prime experience of any Venetian visit, and since they form in themselves one of the great tourist spectacles, they are unlikely to disappear altogether.

Even on severely practical grounds, the gondola is still useful to Venetians, for there are eleven gondola ferries across the Grand Canal, three of them working all

Tourists take a ride along the Grand Canal in a flotilla of gondolas. The striped poles are mooring posts. In the background are the domes of S. Maria della Salute



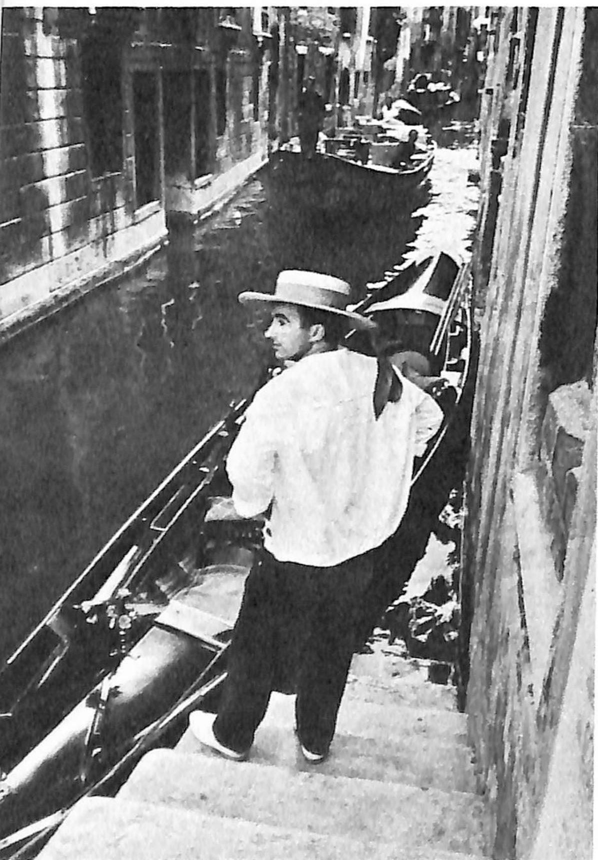
Three proud *ferri* silhouetted against the waters of the Bacino S. Marco. Gondolas lie idle during winter. Once there were 10,000 in Venice; now there are around 400. But as long as there are tourists, there will be gondoliers



A horse's head or sea-horse, attached to an armrest. Such decoration is vanishing from gondolas



night (they have gay little shelters, often charmingly decorated with greeneries and Chinese lanterns, in which off-duty gondoliers picturesquely sprawl the hours away, sometimes engaging in desultory argument, or playing with a communal cat). The gondolier is essential to the spirit and self-esteem of Venice. 'The gondolier,' says a municipal handbook, 'cannot demand, even as a tip, a higher fare than is indicated on the notice that must be affixed to his gondola'; but it is wonderful what circumventions he can devise to augment his income, and how expensive his diverse pleasantries somehow prove to be, his odd droppings of curious knowledge, his mastery of saints' days and old customs, his improbable historical anecdotes and his blue persuasive eyes.



A young gondolier stands by his craft on a Venetian backwater. Every gondolier is something of a showman, both in his dexterity and the strange warning cries he utters

For myself, I am willing to pay a little extra for the delight of watching his dexterity. At first the gondola may strike you as wasp-like and faintly sinister: but soon you will be converted to its style, and recognize it as the most beautiful instrument of transport on earth, except perhaps the jet aircraft. Each example, they say, has a distinct personality of its own, fostered by minute variations of woodwork or fitting, and the gondolier plays upon this delicate soundbox like a virtuoso. Some of his attitudes are very handsome—especially when Carpaccio portrays him, poised in striped tights on a gilded poop. In particular there is a soft gliding motion, to convey the boat around sharp corners, that reminds me irresistibly of a ski-turn: the feet are placed in a ballet-like position, toes well out; the oar is raised to waist level; the body is twisted lithely in the opposite direction to the turn; and round the gondola spins, with a swing and a swish, always crooked but never ungainly, the gondolier proud and calm upon its stern.

He utters a series of warning cries when he makes a manoeuvre of this sort, throaty and distraught, like the call of an elderly and world-weary sea-bird. These cries so affected Wagner, during his stay in Venice, that they may have suggested to him (so he himself thought) the wail of the shepherd's horn at the opening of the third act of *Tristan:* and they are so truly the *cri-de-coeur* of Venice that during the black-outs of the two World Wars, pedestrians adopted them too, and sang them out as warnings at awkward street corners. The traditional basic words of the admonition are *premi* and *stali*—'left' and 'right': but it is difficult to discover precisely how they are used. Nowadays the gondoliers seem to vary their cry. I have often heard the old calls, but generally, it seems to me, the modern gondolier merely shouts '*Oi!*' and I know one modernist who, swinging off the Grand Canal into the Rio San Trovaso, habitually raises his fingers to his teeth for a raucous but effective whistle.

It is not at all easy to row a gondola. The reverse stroke of the oar is almost as laborious as the forward stroke, because the blade must be kept below water to keep the bows straight; and skilful manipulation, especially in emergencies, depends upon instant movement of the oar in and out of the complicated rowlock (which looks like a forked stump from a petrified forest). To see this skill at its most advanced, spend ten minutes at one of the Grand Canal *traghetto* stations, and watch the ferry-men at work. They move in a marvellous unity, two to a gondola, disciplined by some extra-sensory bond, and they bring their boats to the landing-stage with a fine flamboyant flourish, whipping their oars neatly out of the rowlocks to act as brakes, and coming alongside with a surge of water and an endearing showmen's glance towards the audience on the bank.



No gondolas, these, but the workhorses of the Venice waterways. Boats carry fruit and vegetables to the market at the Rialto, oldest sector of the city. This is the best place to enter into the life of the Venetian people

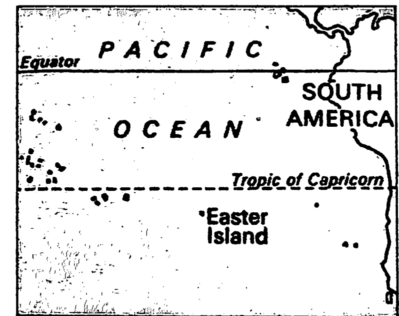
The sweeping prow of a gondola frames a less graceful Venetian craft. The gondolier is no ordinary oarsman. His delicately-balanced boat calls for special skill in handling, and he controls it with the poise of a ballet dancer

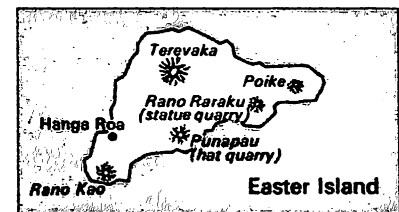


THOR HEYERDAHL

Giants of Easter Island

More than 2,000 miles off the coast of Chile, giant stone statues gaze arrogantly across the windswept grass of Easter Island. In the 1950s Thor Heyerdahl solved some of the mysteries of how they were carved and hauled into position, but the history of the race that produced them may never be known





ANYONE who is dreaming of a trip to the moon can get a little foretaste of it by climbing about on the dead volcanic cones of Easter Island. Not only has he completely forsaken our own hectic world, which seems so immeasurably far away in the blue, but the landscape can easily give an illusion of being on the moon: a friendly little moon hung between sky and sea, where grass and ferns cover the treeless craters which lie gaping sleepily towards the sky, ancient and moss-covered, lacking the tongues and teeth of their fiery days. There are a number of these peaceful volcanoes in hummocks all over the island. They are green outside and green within. The time of eruptions is past and so remote that at the bottom of some of the largest craters sky-blue lakes with waving green reeds mirror clouds flying before the trade wind.

One of these waterlogged volcanoes is called Rano Raraku, and it is here that the men in the moon seem to have been most busily at work. You do not see them, but you have a feeling that they have only hidden themselves away in sealed-up holes in the ground, while you walk about in the grass at your ease and survey their interrupted tasks. They have fled in haste from what they were doing, and Rano Raraku remains one of the greatest and most curious monuments of mankind, a monument to the great lost unknown behind us, a warning of the transience of man and civilization.

The whole mountain massif has been reshaped, the volcano has been greedily cut up as if it were pastry, although sparks fly when a steel axe is driven against the rock to test its strength. Hundreds of thousands of cubic feet of rock have been cut out and tens of thousands of tons of stone carried away. And in the midst of the mountain's gaping wound lie more than 150 gigantic stone men, finished and unfinished, in all stages, from the just begun to the just completed. At the foot of the mountain stand finished stone men, side by side like a supernatural army, and one feels miserably small in approaching the place, whether on horseback or driving in a jeep along the ancient roads which the vanished sculptors laid down.

A fallen giant stares up at the sky. Most of the statues were torn down during the first half of the eighteenth century, possibly by Polynesians, who may have invaded Easter Island at the end of the seventeenth century



An array of giants. Roggeveen, the Dutchman who discovered Easter Island in 1722, found that the islanders bowed down before the statues and appeared to worship them. Fifty years later Captain Cook thought that they were monuments to royal or holy people, and that the temple platforms were used as burial places by the islanders

Dismounting from a horse in the shadow of a great block of stone, one sees that the block has features on its underside: it is the head of a fallen giant. On going up to the foremost figures, which are buried in the earth up to their chests, one is shocked to find that one cannot even reach up to the colossus's chin. And if you try to climb up on to those which have been flung down flat on their backs, you feel Lilliputian, because often you have the greatest difficulty even in getting up on to their stomachs. Once up on the prostrate Goliath you can walk about freely on his chest and stomach, or stretch yourself out on his nose, which often is as long as an ordinary bed. Thirty feet was no uncommon length for these figures: the largest, which lay unfinished and aslant on the side of the volcano, was sixty-nine feet long, so that, counting a storey as ten feet, this stone man was as tall as a seven-storey house. That was a burly giant, a regular mountain troll.

In Rano Raraku you feel the mystery of Easter Island at close quarters. The air is laden with mystery; while bent on you is the silent gaze of those 150 eyeless faces. The huge standing figures look down at you with an enigmatic stare: your steps are watched from every single ledge and cave in the mountain, where giants unborn and giants dead and broken lie as in mangers and on sick-beds, lifeless and helpless because the intelligent creative force has left them. Nothing moves except for the drifting clouds above you. It was so when the sculptors went, and so it will always be. The oldest figures, those which were completed, stand there proud, arrogant and tight-lipped; as though defiantly conscious that no chisel, no atomic power will ever open their mouths and make them speak.

But even though the giants' mouths were sealed seven times over, anyone going about in the chaos of uncompleted figures up the mountain slope could learn a good deal. Wherever our expedition climbed and wherever we halted, we were surrounded, as in a hall of mirrors, by enormous faces circling about us, seen from in front, in profile and at every angle. All were astonishingly alike. All had the same stoical expression and the most peculiar long ears. We had them above us, beneath us and on both sides. We clambered over noses and chins and trod on mouths and gigantic fists, while huge bodies lay leaning over us on the ledges higher up.

Gradually we perceived that the whole mountain was one single swarm of bodies and heads, right from the foot up to the very top of the precipice on the uppermost edge of the volcano. Even as far up as here, 500 feet above the plain, half-finished giants lay side by side staring up into the firmament, in which only the hawks were sailing. But the swarm of stone phantoms did not stop here: they went on side by side and over one another in one unbroken procession down the side of the crater into the interior of the volcano. The cavalcades of stiff, hard-bitten stone men, standing and lying, finished and unfinished, went right down to the lush green reed-bed on the margin of the lake, like a people of robots petrified by thirst in a blind search for the water of life.

We were all equally overwhelmed and impressed by the gigantic enterprise which had once been interrupted in Rano Raraku, and when we began to dig the impression was no less astonishing. The famous Easter Island heads were large enough already, standing on the slope at the foot of the volcano, but when we dug our way down along the throat, the chest appeared, and under the chest

the stomach and arms continued and the whole of the huge body right down to the hips, where long thin fingers with enormous curved nails met under a protruding belly.

But this uncovering solved none of the problems of Easter Island: how, for instance, was it possible to carry up a large hat which was to be placed on the very top of the head, especially considering that the hat too was of stone, and could easily have a volume of 200 cubic feet, and weigh as much as two elephants? How can one lift the weight of two elephants to the level of the roof of a four-storey house, when there are no cranes and not even a high point in the neighbourhood? The few men who could find room for themselves up on the figure's skull could not possibly have dragged an enormous stone hat up to the small flat space which was their only foothold. And although a crowd of men could stand on the ground at the foot of the statue they were mere Lilliputians, who could not stretch their arms more than a fraction of the way up the lower part of the giant. How then could they have pushed that weight high in the air, right up past the chest, and on past the towering head up to the very top of the skull? Metal was unknown, and the island was practically treeless.

Even our engineers shook their heads resignedly. We felt like a crowd of schoolboys standing helpless before a practical conundrum. The invisible moon-dwellers down in their holes seemed to be triumphing over us, asking: 'Guess how this engineering work was done! Guess how we moved these gigantic figures down the steep walls of the volcano and carried them over the hills to any place in the island we liked!'

To tackle the problem at its root we first studied the numerous uncompleted figures which lay on the ledges in the quarry itself. It was clear that all the work had been broken off suddenly; thousands of primitive unpolished stone picks still lay in the open-air workshop, and as different groups of sculptors had worked simultaneously on many different statues, all stages of carving were represented. The ancient stone-cutters had first attacked the bare rock itself and made the face and front part of the statue. Then they had cut alleyways along the sides and made giant ears and arms, always with extremely long and slender fingers, curved over the belly. Next they had cut their way underneath the whole figure from both sides, so that the back took the shape of a boat with a narrow keel attached to the rock.

When the façade of the figure was complete in every minute detail, it was scrubbed and thoroughly polished: the only thing they took care not to do was to mark in the eye itself under the overhanging brows. For the present the giant was to be blind. Then the keel was hacked away under the back, while the colossus was wedged up with stones to prevent it from slipping away and sliding down into the abyss. It was a matter of utter indifference to the sculptors whether they carved the figure out of a perpendicular wall or a horizontal slab, and head upwards or downwards, for the half-finished giants lay all over the place and leaning in every direction, as on a battlefield; the only thing that was consistent about them was that the back was the last part to remain attached to the rock.

When the back also had been cut loose the breakneck transportation down the cliff to the foot of the volcano had begun. In some cases colossi weighing many

THE GIANTS GUARD THEIR SECRET

A man on horseback is dwarfed by the giants' heads. Their torsos lie buried under the soil. It is thought that the statues were carved as self-portraits by a race who stretched their ears with weights and may have originally come from South America. This is borne out by the fact that the heads originally had huge topknots of red rock, representing red hair, and mummies with red hair have been found on South America's Pacific coast. There is an Easter Island legend that their first king had long ears when he reached the island from the east. The 'Long Ears' ruled over a subservient race of 'Short Ears', of Polynesian stock. Natives of the island have explained how the gigantic statues were set up on the temple platforms. First the statues were dragged to the site with ropes, on wooden sledges or rollers. Then they were gradually hauled up an incline of stones until they were vertical





tons had been swung down a perpendicular wall and manoeuvred over statues on which work was still proceeding on the ledge below. Many were broken in transport, but the overwhelming majority had come down complete—that is to say, complete but for legs, for every single statue ended in a flat foundation just where the abdomen ends and the legs begin. They were lengthened busts with complete torsos.

At the foot of the cliff lay a thick layer of gravel and decomposed rock, often piled up into ridges and regular hillocks. This was the result of thousands of tons of stone splinters which had been carried away from the quarry by the sculptors. Here the giant men had been temporarily raised to a standing position in holes dug in the rubble. Not till now did the sculptors set to work on the unfinished back, and the neck and hinder parts took shape, while the waist was decorated with a belt surrounded by rings and symbols. This little belt was the only piece of clothing the naked statues wore, and with one exception they were all men.

But the mysterious progress of the stone colossi did not end here among the rubble. When the backs also were finished they were to go on to their wall-less temples. Most of them had gone already: only comparatively few were still on the waiting list for transportation from their holes at the foot of the volcano. All the fully completed giants had moved on, mile by mile over the whole island: some had finished their journey up to ten miles from the quarry and the very smallest weighed from two to ten tons.

The strangest thing was that the colossi had been carried about not as shapeless lumps which could stand a knock or two, but as perfectly smooth human forms, scrubbed and polished front and back, from the lobes of their ears to the roots of their nails. Only the eye-sockets were still lacking. How had it been possible to move the complete finished article across country without rubbing it to pieces? Nobody knew.

At their destination the blind stone men were not erected just by dropping them down into a hole; on the contrary, they were lifted up in the air and placed on the top of an *ahu*, or temple platform, where they remained, their base a couple of yards above the ground. Now at last holes were chiselled for the eyes; now at last the giants might see where in the world they were. Now they were to have 'hats' put on their heads—'hats' which weighed from two to ten tons.

Actually, it is not quite correct to talk about 'hats'. The old native name for this gigantic head decoration is *pukao*, which means 'topknot', the usual coiffure worn by male natives on Easter Island at the time of its discovery. Why did the old masters lift this *pukao* up on top of the giant in the form of an extra block? Why could they not simply cut it out of the same stone with the rest of the figure? Because the important detail was the *colour* of the topknot. The greyish-yellow black-grained stone from which the statues are carved was found only at the quarry in Rano Raraku; but seven miles away, at the opposite end of the island, was a little overgrown crater where the rock was of a very special red colour. It was this special red stone they wanted for the statues' hair. So they had dragged yellowish-grey statues from one end of the island and red topknots from the other, and had placed one upon the other on more than fifty raised temple platforms all round the coast. Most of these platforms had a couple of statues

side by side, a great many had four, five or six, and one had no fewer than fifteen red-haired giants standing side by side, with their bases twelve feet above the ground.

Not one of these red-haired giants stands in his old place on the temple platforms. Even the Dutchman, Jacob Roggeveen, who first discovered Easter Island in 1722, arrived too late to see them all standing in their old places. But the first explorers were at any rate able to testify that many of the statues were still standing at their posts with red *pukaos* on their heads. In the middle of the last century the last giant crashed down from his temple, and the red topknot rolled like a blood-stained steamroller over the pavement of the temple square. Today only the blind hairless statues in the rubble-filled holes at the foot of the volcano still stand with heads raised defiantly.

I stood on the top of the crater of Rano Raraku and had a magnificent view all round over the grass-clad island. Behind me there was a fairly steep slope down into the overgrown interior of the volcano, where the little sky-blue crater lake lay as clear as a mirror in a broad framework of the greenest reeds I have ever seen. Perhaps they seemed a brighter green compared with the grass all over the island, which now, in the dry season, was beginning to turn yellow. In front of me there was a steep drop down the terraced wall of the quarry to the flat ground at the foot of the volcano, where the members of our expedition were working like ants, excavating the brown earth around the gigantic figures. Their horses stood tethered here and there, looking pitiably small alongside the burly giants.

From here I had a good survey of what had happened in the past: this was the focal point and centre of Easter Island's most conspicuous problem. This was the statues' maternity home: I was standing on a sturdy embryo myself, watching the swarms of others all down the descent both before and behind me. And on the slope at the mountain's foot the new-born stood erect, blind and hairless, waiting in vain to be hauled away on their long transport.



A stone head lies among the rubble, displaying one of its elongated ears. Peculiar designs on the statues also appear on more recent carved wood figures discovered on the island, supporting the theory that the giants were the work of the ancestors of the present inhabitants

JOHN MASSEY STEWART

The face of Moscow

As the capital of the vast Soviet Union, Moscow is a meeting-point for many races. Besides the Muscovites themselves, thronging Red Square for a floodlit celebration or strolling in Gorki Park, there are peasants up from Georgia on shopping expeditions, tan-skinned skull-capped Uzbeks from Central Asia, and slant-eyed Yakuts from the Far East



DRIVING INTO Moscow from the airport, you notice first the huge areas of new blocks of flats. You drive into the centre along the wide and spotlessly clean streets, the traffic—growing year by year but mercifully not as fast as in the capitals of Western Europe—not yet a problem. Then you may notice the smell of poor-quality petrol, which always tells the visitor: 'You have arrived. You're *here.*'

The corridor of your hotel—whether new or old—will have a long strip of narrow carpet down its parquet length, and your wash-basin will have no plug: Russians consider it hygienic to wash in running water. On the landing sits the *dezhurnaya,* in charge of the floor, who will hand you your key with the flash of a stainless steel tooth.

You eat your first Moscow meal: an interminable wait for service, a deafening band, delicious soup or black caviare, toughish meat, then one of the best ice-creams in the world, all washed down with a bottle of Caucasus mineral water.

You see the statutory sights and glimpse the *izbas*—the picturesque old log cabins—which are disappearing as the flats are built. You notice the huge drainpipes for the winter snow, the double glazing, the chauffeured Chaikas driving party leaders hidden behind curtains, the lack of advertising and neon signs, the hand-painted cinema posters. The people have sallow complexions; the babies are done up in lace-and-blanket parcels and carried instead of pushed in prams; square women labourers drive steam-rollers or shovel tar—while other women have executive positions. Your eye is caught by the red machines selling fizzy drinks in the streets at twopence a glass, by the portraits and statues of Lenin, by the political slogans and banners, by the loudspeakers, by the *druzhniki* or volunteer police in their red armbands. Badges may be pinned on you proclaiming 'Peace and Friendship'. You learn that tourists always take priority over Muscovites—'our guests', we are called; and that children seem the most privileged class: for instance, even old people stand for them in the metro or on buses.

Above the Kremlin churches rise splendid onion domes, recently regilded. The crosses above crescents signify the triumph of Christianity over Islam

Many of Moscow's historic churches are preserved, after costly restoration. One that is still used is the Trapeznaya Church within the Novodevichy Monastery. It is crowded each Sunday, largely by kerchiefed peasant women





FIREWORK DISPLAY IN RED SQUARE



Twice a year—on the holidays of May Day and November 7, the anniversary of the Bolshevik Revolution of 1917—Red Square is lit by floodlights and fireworks. On the left is St. Basil's Cathedral, with its multi-coloured domes; on the right is the Kremlin wall



Moscow's Central Market functions all the year round with *kolkhozniki*—collective farm workers—selling fruit, vegetables and flowers either from their *kolkhozes* or from the half-acre private plots that they cultivate for themselves. In Russia's bleak winter, Georgians bring fresh produce here from their sunny southern republic to sell at inflated prices while Moscow's shop counters are bare



Moscow's metro system, with about sixty stations, is the pride of all Muscovites, a sightseeing 'must' for visiting citizens, and regarded as a great Soviet achievement. The air-conditioned stations are like underground palaces of marble and onyx, decorated in different styles with murals, mosaics, bas-reliefs and crystal chandeliers. There are no advertisements, and no litter. A London Underground engineer supervised construction of the first stations, begun in 1932, with Khrushchev, then beginning his rise to power, in charge. The $2\frac{1}{2}$ million passengers a day have no tickets. Instead they put five kopecks into a turnstile coinbox, and can travel anywhere on the network



In the Tretyakov Art Gallery, a guide shows Russian visitors round the collection of Russian fine art, ranging from eleventh-century mosaics to contemporary paintings. In the basement, unexhibited, lie ideologically unacceptable works by pioneers of twentieth-century art, such as Chagall and Kandinsky. Socialist realism—a realistic style with a political moral—remains the most important attribute of publicly exhibited art. The Tretyakov has $1\frac{1}{2}$ million visitors a year



Facing the Kremlin across Red Square is the largest and most famous shop in the Soviet Union, GUM, named after the initial Russian letters for State Department Store. Before the Russian Revolution, the building contained 240 small shops on four floors under one vast glass roof. Though consumer goods are dearer and fewer than in the West, a quarter of a million people come daily to GUM

In Gorki Park, called after the writer Maxim Gorki, a Muscovite and his girl friend dance an impromptu twist before an intrigued crowd. Dancers near by perform a sedater step to an open-air band. Western dance crazes reach Russia, but are often frowned on by the authorities. Gorki Park is the city's main recreation area, with a boating lake, cafés, restaurants and exhibition halls



Chess players in Gorki Park. Chess claims more enthusiasts in the Soviet Union than anywhere else on earth: more than 4 million players belong to clubs

LAURENS VAN DER POST

Russia's spell-binding circus

A traveller finds in the circus a true expression of the Russian character

MY PLANE from Moscow to Central Asia was due to leave at midnight. My young girl guide from Intourist informed me that I had therefore ample time to go to the ballet, theatre, opera or circus. I chose the circus which I thought might bring me nearer to the ordinary people of Russia: and also I have loved circuses since childhood and had not seen one for many years. I never regretted the choice. I enjoyed myself so much that night at the Moscow Circus and learnt so much from it that wherever I went in the months to come I never missed a circus.

The experience gained in this manner was for me revealing. Through it I seemed to enter at once an extremely old and extremely contemporary world. I found the circuses even more significant than ballet, theatre or opera, for the importance of the circus to the ordinary people themselves is evident. First the circus has a permanent home in all the major cities of the Soviet Union and in the blueprints of the new towns springing up all over the country a circus building is included. To a person like myself who knew circuses only in their itinerant forms of great bell tents and marquees piled in painted caravans drawn creakingly along country roads and lanes by the placid and wrinkled pachyderms of India and Burma, some of these buildings seemed almost too good to be true.

At Rostov-on-Don, for instance, the circus building with its front of soaring Corinthian columns and classical gable all patiently reconstructed after the destruction of the town by Hitler's hordes, has really to be seen to be believed. Inside it has more glittering tiers than a Hollywood wedding cake. Tier upon dazzling tier rise to a vast domed top; and boxes, each lined with rich red velvet and finished off in curved cream and gold balconies festooned in plaster of Paris flowers, fruit and figurines, mount above them. The circus itself, the symbolism of tight-rope and flying trapeze, the pantomime of harlequin and clown, the dogs, horses and wild animals finding meaning in submission to the will and spirit of man, were all presented with a lavish abandon, a zest for danger and a reckless disregard of the norms of chance and safety that seemed to come straight out of antiquity.

Over and over again I was to feel that I was witnessing the continuation of a tradition that had been founded by gladiators and tempered in the hungry arenas and implacable amphitheatres of Byzantium and Rome. The response of the toil-worn crowds in their shabby clothes added to that impression. Sealed off by their system for some generations from the outside world as was the ancient world by its ignorance, they would look, their faces naked with wonder, at the appearance in the ring of the lions, apes, leopards, hippopotamuses and pythons.

I saw a beautiful young Armenian girl, after taking what seemed to me far more than legitimate liberties with a trapeze, so fired by the response of the crowd that

she went farther still. Her attendants produced an enormous black eagle, which was unhooded and placed on the top of two bars of a trapeze without being tied or secured to it in any way. It sat there swaying, balancing itself with its wings outstretched and its eyes green and hard as rhinestones with angry apprehension above a beak sharp as a Saracen's scimitar, staring through the limelight at the tiers of gaping human faces around and above it. Its talons were so long that they seemed to go twice round the bar of the trapeze and were great enough to have carried off many a lamb to its native cliff top in the mountains of Armenia.

However, this slender young girl, seizing the lower bar of the trapeze in one hand, had herself hoisted about a hundred feet above the ring. There she began to swing high and fast from one side of the dome to the other. By this time all lights were out except a solitary spotlight kept directed on the eagle and the girl, see-sawing violently through what now looked like empty and unsupported space. The eagle's wings were stretched wider, trembling like the prongs of a tuning fork. It looked as if at any moment it might fly off and attack the slight, sequined figure of the girl who was provoking it from below. From time to time in fact the two of them swung up and down so fast that it looked as if the eagle had her in its talons and was carrying her off into the night. But she herself seemed totally impervious to any sense of danger. At the climax she went through a terrifying series of turns and aerobatics on the trapeze, until finally she was left hanging by the toes of one foot from the lowest bar, zooming like a swallow through space, her arms stretched out, and smiling with a strange ecstatic expression on her young face.

Then again the acts done with wild animals and horses were as astonishing. The horse became merely an extension of the will and spirit of man. There was, it seemed, nothing man could not do with a horse. In addition to all the wild, acrobatic and daring riding I saw the troops of Kazak, Cossack and Armenian horsemen attack one another on horseback with glittering foils and a savage skill and abandon that seemed only a sabre-edge away from the real thing. I saw them play a mounted lacrosse in the ring, only supreme skill preventing the players from being crushed or kicked to death among the plunging mounts and flying hooves.

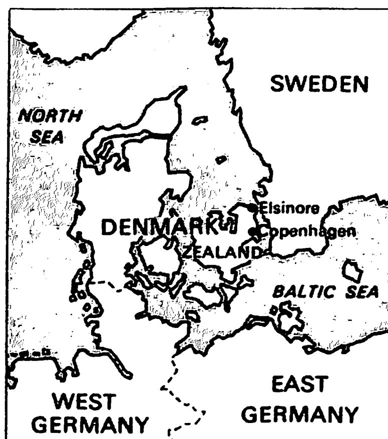
As for the wild animals, no two acts were ever alike. They always had something extra of imagination and risk to add which one had not seen anywhere else. Even I, who love horses, could not fail to respond. The acts with tigers especially were superb. At Alma Ata, in Central Asia, where I saw the finest assembly of Siberian tigers looking as if they had stepped straight out of Blake's poem, 'burning bright in the forests of the night', I made friends with the man who caught and tamed them. It all began in a curious way. Startled, I had woken one night thinking I had heard a lion purring in my room. I had switched on the light and come to the conclusion that out of African homesickness I had dreamt the sound.

Coming back to my hotel for lunch the next day, however, I discovered the real explanation. A dense crowd had gathered in front of the hotel and everyone was looking up at a window next to my own on the first floor. From the window an enormous tiger was looking down benignly at the crowd and sitting on its back was a little girl with yellow curls, aged no more than two. Beside the tiger stood her attractive young mother and her father, a tall man with deep blue eyes and a sad face. This is perhaps the clearest illustration I can give of the place the Soviet circuses have in the ordinary people's lives and imagination.

JOHN HYDE PRESTON

Hamlet's castle

Looking across the narrow sound to Sweden stands the castle of Elsinore, the setting of 'Hamlet'. Did Shakespeare visit Elsinore with a troupe of strolling players? The site of the castle by the sea, its magnificent rooms, the platform where the ghost could well have walked, all suggest that he drew on first-hand knowledge of the home of his tragic hero



THE APPROACH to many of the world's great sights is gloomy. You reach Versailles through the dingy suburbs of Paris and go to Gibraltar by way of one of the meanest towns in Spain; even Rome's miraculous Pantheon is entangled within cramped and traffic-angry little streets. But the twenty-eight-mile drive from Copenhagen to Elsinore, along the blue waters of the Øresund, with its many ships and the coast of Sweden on the other side, is one of the most magic on earth. And at the end are the soaring green roofs of Hamlet's castle.

The real Hamlet never saw Elsinore; he had been in his grave on the isle of Mors, in North Jutland's beautiful Limfjord, nearly seven centuries before Kronborg Castle was built. His true name was Amleth and he was the only son of a tribal chieftain who had been murdered by his brother for both his power and his wife. The nineteen-year-old sailor prince realized he was in the way of his uncle's schemes and would be the next to die, and he suddenly turned fox. He pretended to have lost his wits, sat all day in the ashes of the great fireplace, and made an idiot's answer to all questions. But the usurper-chieftain's personal bodyguards still had a warm fondness for Amleth and seemed to guess his secret.

One evening he got them all drunk and, while they slept, he stole a sword, sneaked into his uncle's private quarters and killed him. Then he appeared before the people, told them the whole story of his patient cunning to avenge his father's murder, and they joyously hailed him as their new chieftain.

It is a typical folk tale, barren of subtlety. There is no Ophelia. But Danes loved to tell their children about the wily young prince and how he triumphed, and the children loved to tell their children. For many generations it was a favourite.

During the next 300 years Denmark was converted to a new religion called Christianity, which tended to make men turn their backs on their simple beginnings. A Danish son of the 'new enlightenment', Saxo Grammaticus, feared that the old hero legends of his land would be forgotten in the excitement about religion. So he collected the most famous and wrote them on parchment in distinguished Latin. One that he set down was the tale of young Prince Amleth and his revenge. That was around 1200.

In 1601, under the creative hand of Shakespeare's genius, the 700-year-old hero



In the sixteenth century King Frederick II employed Dutch architects to rebuild Krogen Castle. The massive palace, renamed Kronborg, is a fine example of Renaissance building

legend became a mirror of mankind and the most famous tragedy in the English language. A thousand books about the mystery of the creative process cannot be so instructive as a comparison of *Hamlet* with the bare bones of Saxo's original folk tale. Shakespeare discarded all that was not tantalizing, made his prince a charmer, and played upon the brilliant vagaries of his hero's mind, making him the mirror of his own astounding genius.

When Shakespeare started writing *Hamlet*, his scene had been almost miraculously set for him. Denmark, then one of Europe's strongest and wealthiest powers, had finished rebuilding the magnificent fortress and pleasure dome at the entrance to the Baltic Sea which was named Kronborg—Crown Castle—the jewel of the realm. It was dominated by a restless, Leonardo-like young prince in his teens, who later became Christian IV, a lover of wine and beautiful women, a heart-breaker, a wit, a linguist, an organ designer and a surpassing architect. Most of the great palaces in Copenhagen today bear the famous monogram, a capital C enclosing the figure 4, with which he signed all his work. Copenhagen is Christian's city; it was he who transformed it from a little merchants' harbour into the great capital of the north. He delighted in music and the theatre, and had string quartets by candlelight in the Little Salon at Elsinore on spring evenings; during the summer actors came from all over Europe to stage plays in the great central courtyard, which can seat 3,000 people. Among them were the Globe Players from London.

When I visited Elsinore I stood with the commandant of the castle, Colonel Gabel-Jørgensen, on the wide, grassy rampart where Shakespeare had Hamlet speak to his father's ghost. The Colonel showed me the rue that grows in the brick-work (the only place the herb is known to grow in all Denmark) and said it seemed fantastic that Shakespeare knew the Danish word for it, *rude* (spoken softly as *roótha*), though he spelled it *rood* in the play. Gabel-Jørgensen glanced up at the soaring castle and said: 'The most wonderful gift a great artist ever made to another country was made by Shakespeare when he chose this beautiful palace for the scene of *Hamlet*.'

And fabulously beautiful it is, with its dreaming spires and towers, its high pink-brick ramparts like the walls of Rome, and its vast green copper roofs which are like slanting meadows against the sky. It is a sea castle, built on a peninsula that juts into the Øresund; the sea is on two sides of it, and its moods are sea moods. I have seen it in many weathers—in a grey drizzle when it lies low and menacing, in brilliant sunlight when its green spires seem to rise higher than they are and shimmer in glory. I have seen it from the sea in the light of full moon, when the roofs dream as greenly as new grass over the massive darkened bulk of the great fortress, the peace broken only by the flash from its lighthouse.

The figure who most haunts this beautiful Dutch-Renaissance palace on Denmark's eastern shore is that of the charming, moody, driven young Prince Hamlet. To wander through Kronborg's countless rooms, each with a style of its own and a few of them utterly bleak, and try to force yourself to believe that Hamlet never lived there requires an impossible effort of the will.

The castle was a village in itself—and no small village; the present town of Elsinore grew up around it to serve its needs. It is now hard to believe that Kronborg could have housed such a number and variety of people—King Christian

and his queen, his offspring and their tutors (he had twenty-three children), courtiers, friends, guests of state, mistresses, contingents of the navy and army and hundreds of servants. We can only wonder now where was 'Polonius' house', in which Shakespeare set so many of the early scenes. It may have been a separate building within the three heavily defended moats, near the reedy pond where Ophelia drowned herself. Or it may have been within the palace itself, for Hamlet seems to have had little trouble seeing Ophelia whenever he wished—at least until her father barred him, and it became Ophelia's turn to seek out Hamlet.

Colonel Gabel-Jørgensen assured me that Shakespeare could never have described the castle so perfectly if he had not come to Elsinore with the Globe Players. 'He knew everything about it, how every room looked; he even knew about the ghastly secret casemates down below.' When I protested that Shakespeare described Elsinore as being on 'the dreadful summit of the cliff'—whereas the outer rampart actually rises from a rocky beach—the colonel strode to the edge of the high sea wall and pointed down. 'See! Isn't this cliff enough? In all these centuries the sea has made a beach. There was no beach before—only those big rollers from the Kattegat, breaking on this wall. And another thing; think of all the Danish words he used. I just spoke of rood or rue. *Hamlet* is his only play where he spells ale as *eale*. Doesn't that sound like our Danish *øl?* Of course it does! I haven't the least doubt that Shakespeare once walked just where we are walking now.'

The colonel's enthusiasm was so contagious that it was hard not to fall in with it a little. So few facts about Shakespeare's life are known—even his manuscripts perished when the Puritans pulled down the 'sinful' Globe Theatre in 1644—that only the primmest sceptic would doubt that the playwright came to Elsinore as actor-director of the Globe or Blackfriars company, in which he was one of the leading shareholders.

Should you re-read *Hamlet* shortly before going to Elsinore, the whole place will take on a fantastic immediacy for you. Although Shakespeare was careless about locating the exact scene—often he just says, 'Another room in the castle'—you can almost guess by the action which room it was. When he specifies 'A hall' or 'A hall of State', you know more exactly that he meant the banquet room or the throne room, and when you are in them, you can almost hear the familiar voices speak again.

The people in the play often meet as casually and accidentally as they would in any big house, and Shakespeare cares little where this happens; it is the action that is important. But when you come to the great turret room under the lighthouse, with its wide view over the Sound to the Swedish city of Helsingborg and the hills beyond, you know you are in 'the Queen's closet'. Your eyes almost look around for the arras behind which old Polonius hid himself to overhear Hamlet's private conversation with his mother; this was where the young prince discovered him and stabbed him 'dead, for a ducat, dead!' But there is no arras now; it vanished in the ravening fire that almost destroyed Elsinore in 1629.

From this chamber's windows you look down upon the wide lawn that was the 'platform' where Hamlet spoke to his father's ghost one midnight. (The armed sentries who now patrol there day and night, just as Bernardo and Marcellus did in the first act of *Hamlet*, are not for tourists; they are on active duty, as at every

important lighthouse on Denmark's coasts.) If the mother and uncle of Shakespeare's Hamlet had been light sleepers, they surely would have overheard the fateful conversation.

At Elsinore, indeed, much was overheard; this electronic century is not the first to have innocent-looking 'ears'. The tower in the corner of the audience chamber that contains the king's study has no windows overlooking the huge room; they are all highly decorated panels. But two, which appear to be of heavy wood, are made of the finest painted silk. You have only to stand near one of the silk panels, and you will hear every word spoken in the audience chamber.

Whenever a scene in the play opens with a roll of drums and a flourish of trumpets, you can be sure that it takes place in this audience chamber or the king's study, where a monarch of that time spent many hours at his desk. The drums and the trumpets gave warning in time for his majesty to button his clothes and put on his shoes before some dignitary was ushered in.

Most of the rooms are truly kingly. It was in the Little Hall—little only in name—that Shakespeare's Hamlet did much of his agonized pacing, stopping by a window to look down on the great row of cannon that commanded the narrow entrance to the Baltic Sea. Here the walls are fourteen feet thick, the windows narrow, as a defence against naval guns. Because this room was used mostly for ceremonial state dinners, it was usually deserted and a good place to walk and think out loud. It is here that Polonius tells the king, 'You know, sometimes he walks four hours together here in the lobby', and the queen, whose spies were always at work, says nervously, 'So he does, indeed.' Then the dejected prince comes in, reading a book; he cunningly mistakes Polonius for one of the town's fishmongers and talks wildly, convincing the old man that he is mad.

Suddenly the trumpets sound, and an unexpected troupe of actors from abroad comes in. Hamlet, who knows and loves the stage (and here we get a glimpse of Shakespeare himself, the theatre director, in his daily life), talks with them and persuades them to act before the court a dramatic scene he will write about 'a murder done in Vienna'. When they agree, his gloomy anger with himself turns to jubilation, for he has hit upon his great idea:

> The play's the thing
> Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

It was in the great throne room (alternately called the Knights' Hall) that, after a banquet, Hamlet gave his first festive entertainment to his mother and his villainous uncle. The prince had recently come of age, which made him more dangerous to the impostor king, and such a tribute of outward affection was called for. But the entertainment was the fatal play.

What a room for a theatrical performance! With its great gold chandeliers and its exquisite Gobelin tapestries, it is one of the most startlingly beautiful in all Europe. You come on it unexpectedly from a small ante-room, enter through an ordinary-sized door—and you gasp. The room before you seems to soar in space—a dazzling white radiance crossed by sunbeams. When, from the middle of this immense room, you look back at the door by which you entered, it looks like a door in a doll's house. The great windows, rising from floor level almost to the oak-beamed ceiling, deeply recessed, make this room blinding in its beauty and majesty. On

days of sun, or in the glare from snow and sea, the brilliance of the light shafts from the deep windows with their chalk-white walls is staggering.

It was evening in this room, illumined by hundreds of candles in the great chandeliers, when Hamlet gave his entertainment for his mother and uncle, who sat pleased and serene. When the players were ready to come on, the candles were snuffed out one by one and only the stage was lighted. A player-king and player-queen were shown together in an orchard. The king signified that he wished to have a nap, and his fond lady left him alone. As he slept, a dark nobleman crept in and bent over to poison him. The real king could stand it no longer. He rose, panic-stricken, to be discovered in his crime, and staggered from the room. The ghost had told the truth, and Hamlet was at last sure of his course.

In this same Knights' Hall, two acts later, *Hamlet, Prince of Denmark,* comes to its bloody end—the room strewn with corpses. It would seem that Shakespeare himself may have been a little appalled by the havoc he had wrought in such a stately hall, because he goes out of his way to comment on the carnage. He puts the speech into the mouth of the young fighting prince of Norway, Fortinbras, whose eyes were used to blood. In that majestic room the sight congealed him, wronged his sense of place, and he simply said:

Take up the bodies: such a sight as this
Becomes the field, but here shows much amiss.

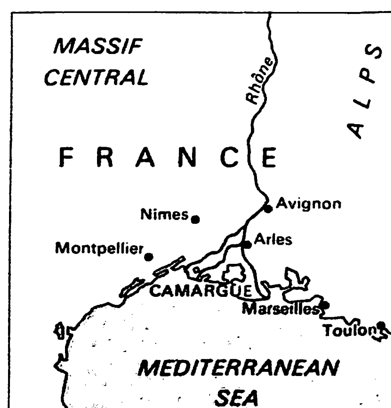
The castle, with its 206-foot-long Knights' Hall, was carefully restored by Christian IV after it was gutted by fire in 1629. The great courtyard forms a striking setting for performances of *Hamlet* by visiting theatrical companies from many countries



MICHEL DROIT

Horses of the Camargue

The Camargue is a lonely region of lakes, marshes and waste land lying between the Grand Rhône and the Petit Rhône, about fifty miles from Marseilles. This area of limitless horizons is the home of herds of small black bulls, raised mainly for bull-fighting, and of the half-wild white horses ridden by the herdsmen



ALL AROUND us the Camargue stretched into infinity. The bulls and cows went at their own pace, and we followed them in silence, for René Barbut, one of the *gardians* who herd horses and bulls on the Camargue, seemed to be struck by dumbness. At times, however, he would let out a raucous cry, strike the flank of his horse with an impatient heel and dash out across a patch of marsh, raising sprays of blue water in his track, in order to catch a straying bullock and lead it back to the bosom of the herd. Then he would return to my side, and we would continue our silent ride, for, when face to face with the Camargue, Barbut knows just as well how to wield the words that express his thoughts as to practise that silence which awakens feeling.

Yes, René Barbut has truly lived the life of his dream, in this land of salt, sand and water, of mirages and mystery. For me he is the incarnation of the true type of pure Camargue *gardian*, of whom fewer and fewer remain.

With René I was seeing the true Camargue, for it is only on horseback that you should ramble across it. From the height at which you are seated you can look at the country from the best angle, and your mount, whether walking or galloping, knows instinctively the exact pace suited to exploration.

It is generally considered that the Camargue horse is of North African origin and that it was established in the delta by the Carthaginians, the Moors or the Saracens. Later on, it is said, Julius Caesar, impressed both by its stamina and its vivacity, decided on and encouraged its breeding, and even went so far as to create stud farms. Then the horse of the Camargue is believed to have reverted to its original state, its taste for freedom and its wild life. Others, however, believe that it comes from Asia, like the bull, but this time from Tibet or Chinese Turkestan.

Only one thing is certain: in the same way as the bull, the Camargue horse has lived long enough between the branches of the Rhône to have become a pure product of the district. The sun, the wind, the salt marsh plants and the waters of the river have made him what he appears today. And when you see him galloping bare and free along the sea coast, his form, his coat and his movements harmonize so well with the waves breaking on the pale sand that you would say

he was born of the foam of this Mediterranean, which no doubt holds the key to the mystery of his origins.

Grey at birth but very soon turning white, and small of stature, the horse of the Camargue rarely exceeds fourteen and a quarter hands at the withers. His silhouette is robust and thick set, and his joints are strong. His hoofs are of so hard a horny matter that he can easily do without horseshoes. His neck is muscular, his brow wide and flat, his eyes very deep set, his muzzle rounded and his nostrils wide open. But it is his long mane and his tail that sweeps the ground that give him at one and the same time his character and his nobility.

The horse of the Camargue is naturally lively and strong. He dislikes trotting, and can hardly be said to shine at it, but will pass most willingly from a slightly ambling gait—tiring to the uninitiated—to a rapid, very supple gallop which is remarkably successful in avoiding the thousand and one obstacles in his path. Exceptionally abstemious, he is generally not used to oats, the salt in the grasses and the vegetation of the marshes being sufficient to ensure his outstanding endurance. He is not scared of doing thirty miles a day, and people in the Camargue like to recall that the Marquis de Baroncelli, mounted on Sultan, and accompanied by Jacques Marignan, the then mayor of Les Saintes, rode from Les Saintes-Maries-de-la-Mer to Lyons and back, that is about 280 miles, in forty-three hours.

But the greatest and most precious quality of the Camargue horse is his extraordinary knowledge of the bulls. Born near them, in the same wild surroundings, having grown up beside them and led the same free life, having eaten of the same plants and quenched his thirst, like them, with the water from the canals or the Rhône, he knows remarkably well how to stick to the animals, anticipate their swerves, swing round with them, avoid their charges and cut off their retreat. He has an instinct for sorting them out, and no scientific cross breeding would be able to replace the pure Camargue horse.

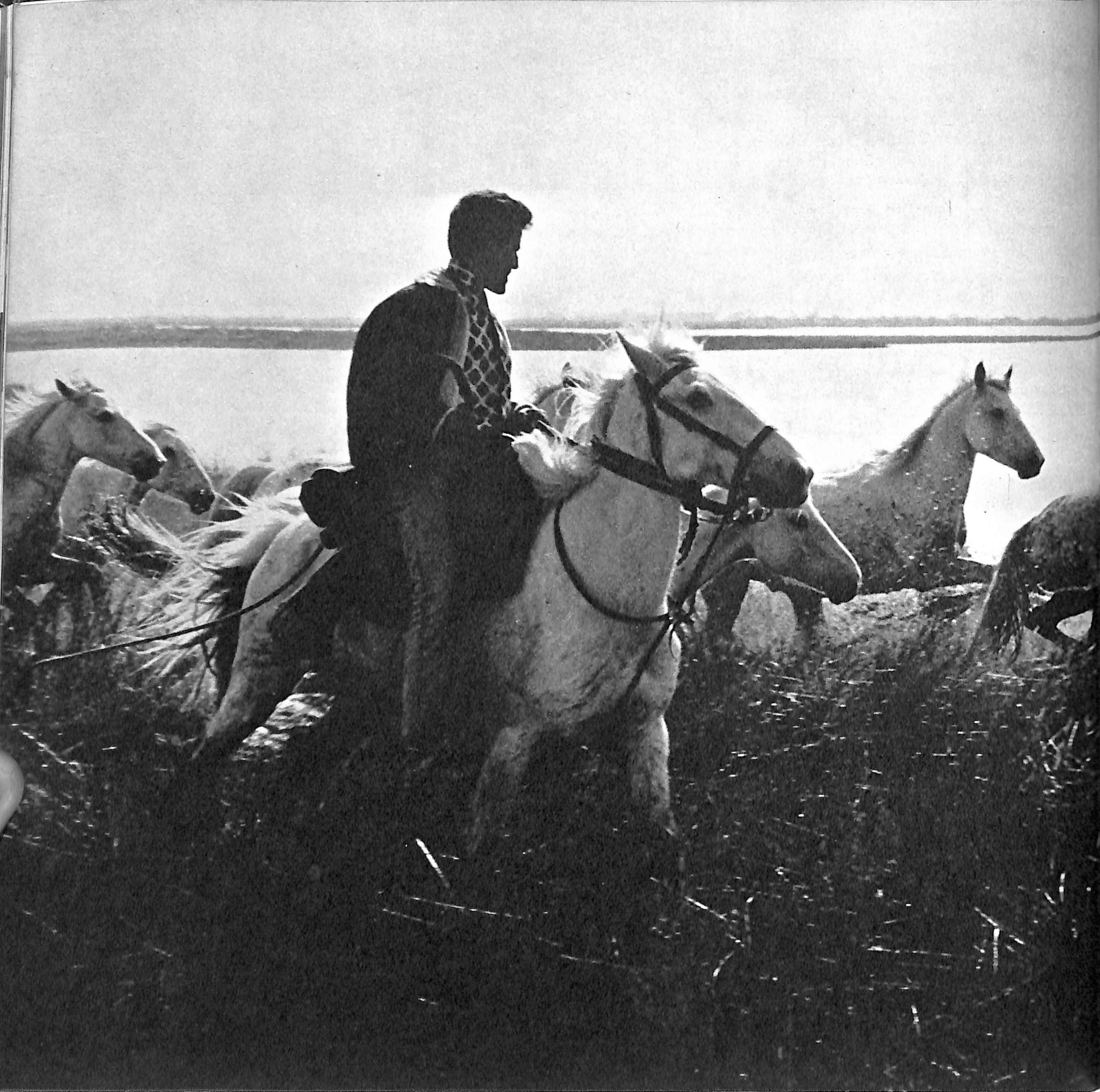
The manner of riding used by the Camargue *gardians* is like that of everyone for whom the horse is above all a means of transport and a professional tool, but it would hardly satisfy discriminating purists. At least it exactly suits the animal, as it does the country.

The *gardian's* saddle consists of a cantle in the form of a back rest—like that of a cowboy or a Mexican herdsman—and a very high pommel flanked by two saddle bags. The stirrup is a sort of metal cage which beginners are wise to mistrust if they do not wish to have one foot trapped when they fall.

Well seated on the saddle, his chest slightly in, his legs almost stretched at full length and his heels outward, the *gardian* becomes one with his mount in the most efficient way. Even if he is not a classical rider, he is audacious to a rare degree, and absolutely sure of himself on horseback, because riding has always been natural to him as an essential element in his life. Indeed, it comes so naturally to him that he rides just as easily bareback as with a saddle. Round the animal's muzzle the *gardian* knots the *mourraioun*, that is, a lasso which serves as a bridle and of which he holds the end; then, jumping on the horse's bare back, he becomes hardly distinguishable from his mount. Their bodies merge into one shape, as though they had always been predestined for each other, and, like a centaur, they gallop past behind the white-coated mares, seemingly born of the



A *gardian*, riding a white Camargue horse, watches over the bulls. The pure Camargue bulls are raised for *cocarde* contests, in which the bull is not killed, while the cross-bred Spanish bulls are used in the local bull-fights. There are nearly 4,000 head of cattle in the Camargue. In summer the heat dries up the grass and makes stock-raising difficult



ROUND-UP ON THE CAMARGUE



The brotherhood of *gardians* dates from 1512. At Arles, on the nearest Sunday in April to St. George's Day, they celebrate the feast of their patron saint, and after Mass they and their horses are blessed in the square in front of the church

same soil, and modelled and nourished by the same wind, as the herd that they are pursuing.

The breaking in of a Camargue horse is, however, difficult, for its wild character and love of liberty render it averse to carrying a saddle and even more to submitting to the wishes of man.

First of all the animal that you wish to train must be separated from the herd and led into the corral, the fenced enclosure also used for marshalling the bulls.

The second operation consists in catching the horse with a lasso, and then mastering it. This is not without danger to the *gardians*; for, as soon as the horse feels the harsh contact of the rope on his shoulders, and then the brutal pressure of the slip knot, he almost goes mad. He kicks, rears, leaps and tries to escape; he turns over on his back, beating the air with all four legs and lashing out blows with his hoofs, the whole punctuated by terrible whinnyings.

The *gardians* must on no account let go, and at the end of the struggle they have to pass the halter round the horse's nose. This enables them to lead him, exhausted but not vanquished, to the stable where he will remain, more or less hobbled, for about ten days, so that he will gradually get used to the presence of men. They will come to look at him, and later pat him affectionately but carefully.

When the time comes they will begin by throwing a blanket over his back. Later, as soon as they sense that he is in a better mood, they try to make him carry a saddle without stirrups. They will take him out into the corral and make him walk up and down and turn with the help of a leading rein. At last, when he seems to accept the weight of this first burden, he is properly saddled and girthed. Then one of the men mounts on his back and tries to remain there in spite of the way that he leaps, kicks and shies. This is the *débrandage,* the *gardians'* private version of the rodeo, in which their greatest risk is that of being trapped beneath the horse. For, in order to rid himself of his unwelcome guest, the animal often finds nothing more effective than suddenly to turn over sideways and vigorously roll on his back.

The man does not always win the first round of this struggle, nor even the second. Nevertheless, if he has held on all through a session, he is generally accepted, or at least tolerated. But it still implies long and patient hours of work in the corral, and many jaunts, before the horse becomes a really reliable mount, that is to say, ready to carry a rider other than his first master, to respond to heels and reins, to accept putting his instinctive knowledge of the country to the service of the one whom he is carrying and to submit to the work expected of him.

A Camargue horse, moreover, never breaks entirely with his heredity and his profound instincts, and after several years of good and loyal service he may still seize an opportunity of proving to his master of the moment that he has remained first and foremost a son of the wind, of chance and of liberty. Then again, more than one dashing classical horseman—including one of the best known in France—has been seen to mock at the stocky outline and somnolent air of the sorry steed which was going to throw him without hesitation a few seconds later.

There is, properly speaking, no large-scale rearing of horses in the Camargue.

As a rule they are used only in connection with guarding the bulls, and they are therefore bred solely as required for this work. At least this was so up till the last few years, for the increase of excursions on horseback for tourists has created new needs.

That is why, today, more and more Arab horses are being imported. But, if they are perfect for the beginner, their feeble stamina, their fear of water and, above all, their lack of natural ease when in contact with the bulls make them only mediocre mounts for the *gardians*. All the same, crosses of Arab and Camargue strains do sometimes give good results. This does not prevent the majority of *manadiers*—the ranchers—and *gardians* from remaining faithful to the pure product of the district, at least to provide their favourite mounts. And one would never see a rider of the *Nacioun gardiano*, as the society of *gardians* is called, take part in a folklore festival or a procession mounted on a horse whose genealogical tree had not had its roots planted in the moist and salty soil of the delta since time immemorial.

A love of the Camargue implies, in fact, an equal attachment to the black silhouette of the bull and the white profile of the Camargue horse. Thus the memory of Lou Vibre, the favourite mount of the Marquis de Baroncelli, is inseparable from that of his master in the minds of all. Young folk in the Camargue learn the horse's name in the same breath as that of the most celebrated man. Lou Vibre was buried standing up, an honour reserved to this day only to the great horses of the Camargue.

How many times will not a lonely *gardian* have seen three white, bare forms galloping away by moonlight across the wild salt flats or the livid marshes! And will he not have taken them for the ghosts of Le Prince, Lou Vibre and Sultan, or of others whose memory haunts his faithful and sensitive soul?

Evening over the Camargue. A *gardian* follows his herd on the homeward journey



The magic of Ceylon

Ceylon's charms have been famous since the days of the ancient Greeks. White breakers lap the golden sands of a palm-fringed shore. Inland, terraced paddy fields curve away to distant jungles and high mountains; thousands of lakes—stupendous ruins of ancient reservoirs—flash like jewels in the sun; and impassive statues gaze across the dead city of Polonnaruwa





For more than 700 years this carved statue of the Buddha entering Nirvana has lain at Polonnaruwa, in central Ceylon. The city's greatest glory came in the twelfth century, in the reign of King Parakrama. According to legend, the Buddha visited Ceylon, and converted the demons, known as Yakkas, who lived there

A vista of paddy fields and palm trees. In past centuries Ceylon was called 'the granary of the East', but she now imports over a third of her rice. At the moment there is a drive to make the country self-supporting. Ceylon's main exports are tea, rubber and copra

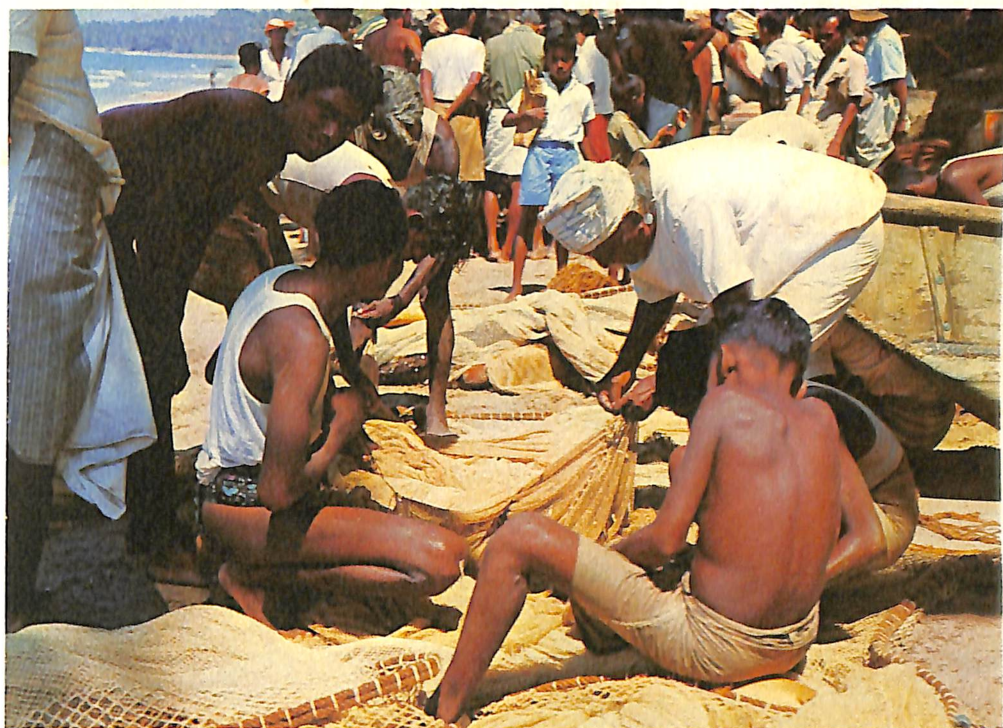


A Tamil fisherman with a Portuguese name—typical of the mixture of races in Ceylon. The Portuguese were the first Europeans to colonize the island, in the sixteenth century. The fisherman holds the tiller of a craft fitted with an inboard motor. On the right is a traditional outrigger fishing boat, leaving the lagoon of Negombo at dawn. Such a boat can travel at fifteen knots with its sail set



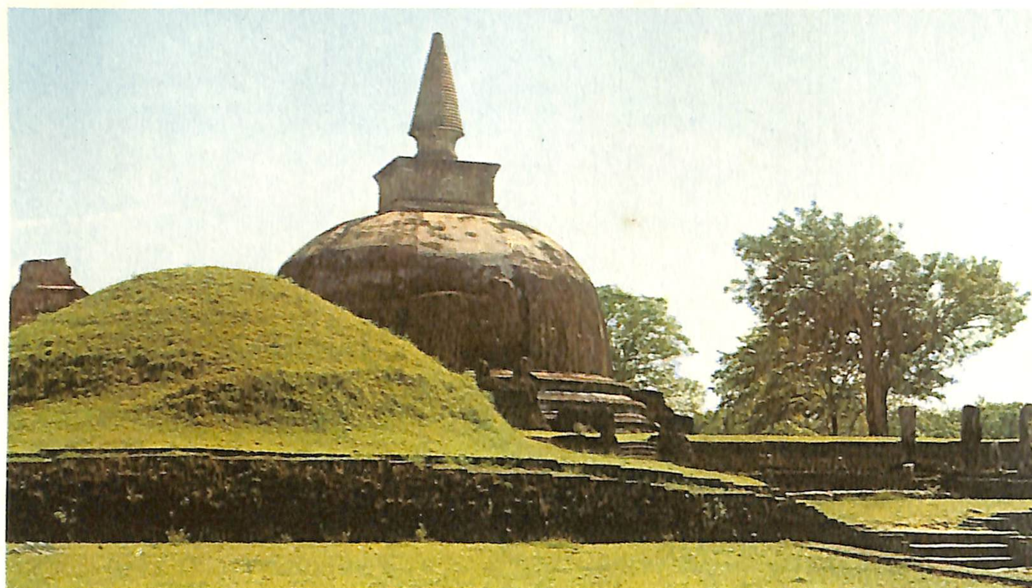


Fishermen of Ceylon



Fishermen mend their nets on the beach. Fishing communities stretch along the coast to the north and south of Colombo

Fishing from the beach in south-west Ceylon. The net forms a great bow out to sea, while two rows of villagers haul on the ends. After the catch is drawn in, an impromptu market is often held on the beach. The main catch is seir fish—which resembles salmon—mackerel, whiting and sole. Ceylon is famous for its excellent crabs and lobsters



Giant dagobas

A dagoba at Polonnaruwa. These sacred structures, which vary in height from forty to 400 feet, were built to honour the Buddha and to gain merit for the builder. As in a Christian church, the spire leads the eye upwards. Each dagoba contains a chamber for religious relics

The restoration of a dagoba at Dedigama, between Kandy and Colombo. First of all the jungle growth of centuries is cleared away, then the earth is carefully removed, to reveal millions of red laterite bricks. Dagobas were built on a communal basis, by whole villages offering their services free



A giant statue of King Parakrama Bahu (1153-86) gazes out over his city of Polonnaruwa. Some authorities say that he is holding an ola leaf from the talipot palm, used for writing on, while modern scholars think that he holds an inverted ox-yoke as a symbol of the efficient dispensation of justice

A lion mask from the coastal village of Ambalangoda used for the performance of *kolam*—a masked folk drama based on pre-Buddhist rituals. Ancient chronicles say that the Sinhalese are descended from Vijaya, who landed in Ceylon in the sixth century BC from northern India, with 700 followers, on the day of the Buddha's death. Vijaya's father was born of the union between an Indian princess and a jungle lion, which is why the Sinhalese call themselves the 'Lion Race'



A Naga King, or snake deity, stands guard before a court in Polonnaruwa. In his left hand he holds a 'vase of plenty' for prosperity and abundance; above his head are seven protective cobra hoods; and at his feet are a pair of dancing dwarfs

Near the City of Gems



When Sinbad the Sailor reached Ceylon from Arabia in the Middle Ages, he found that the surface was 'covered with emery wherewith gems are cut and fashioned, diamonds are in its rivers, and pearls are in its valleys'. Sapphires, rubies, emeralds and garnets in the shops of Kandy and Colombo are mined in pits near Ratnapura, the 'City of Gems'. *Above* The panners swirl the silt in wicker baskets; *left* a worker fills baskets with raw earth from the mine-shaft, ready for panning in the water; while *below* the supervisor searches the residue for precious stones



JOHN MASTERS

In the Land of Fire

At the storm-whipped tip of South America lies a group of islands; the largest is called Tierra del Fuego—the Land of Fire. Discovered by Magellan in 1520, they were by-passed thankfully by the mariners who rounded Cape Horn under sail. But though they are bleak and inhospitable, there is a haunting beauty in their desolation

The squall line fled away to the north-east, the sea smoking dark below it. Soon water and sky, which had been one, separated. From the south-south-west the waves marched by, six to the mile, forty feet from trough to crest, capped by seven feet of breaking water, which the wind seized as it rose from the sheltered valleys and hurled ahead in glittering sheets. The smudge on the horizon took shape as a black, uncompromising island cliff: Cape Horn.

RAIN, HAIL, fog, wind, snow—these are normal here, at the southernmost tip of South America. Here the Andes founder in a wreckage of islands, peninsulas, channels, bays and sounds. Clouds sit low on the mountains, and waterfalls pour out of them. The hardy trees grow close along the ground, where the wind thrusts them. It is a land where penguins hobnob with ostriches, glaciers run into the sea, and raspberries grow in the turf; and all this no farther south of the Equator than Lincoln is to the north of it. The Royal Navy did most of the early surveying, and the chart abounds with such names as Brecknock, Cockburn, Skyring, Darwin, Admiralty, Otway.

The last of the mainland is called Patagonia. The largest of the islands to the south is Tierra del Fuego. All this is divided between Chile to the west and Argentina to the east. Southward, past the Beagle Channel, past Hoste and Navarino and the Wollastons to Horn Island, all is Chilean. In this dangerous labyrinth, in the worst weather in the world, working in small old ships, the Chilean Navy learns and practises its craft, by necessity absorbing an unsurpassed seamanship.

Three tribes of Indians used to live here—Alacalufs in the channels on the Pacific side; Onas on Tierra del Fuego; Yahgans to the south. They paddled about in the falling snow in dugout canoes, stark naked, eating raw mussels. The old *Coastal Pilot* reported that the dastardly Onas even 'manifest great repugnance to entering into relations with the whites'. The kindly missionaries, turning the other cheek, gave these savages blankets to keep them warm and hide their indecencies. The blankets had not been disinfected from measles cases. There are few Alacalufs left now, fewer Yahgans, and no Onas.

Some Yahgans, from a quarter to full-blooded in race, live in half-a-dozen huts on Navarino Island, near Puerto Williams. Their faces have a craggy Mongolian quality, but they wear the expression common to the American Indian from Alaska through Wounded Knee to here—a sullen, deliberately self-scornful crumpling in the face of defeat. In exchange for blankets and trousers the white man took their identity.

Their huts are tiny, smoke-blackened hovels. They live by working at the Puerto Williams naval base and by a little lumbering. 'Don' Felipe makes models of Yahgan canoes. They search for mussels and king crabs (out of season) along the cold and stony shore of the Beagle Channel. Wild geese and two black pigs rummage with them. The Chilean Navy is trying to retrain some Alacalufs for the twentieth century at Puerto Eden. Punta Arenas museum keeps a dusty, dingy record of the old life of all three tribes. For the rest—R.I.P.

It began to rain. Not soft British rain but Cape Horn rain. A wind soughed down the dank, cloud-shrouded slopes behind the settlement. The twisted beech trees groaned and cried, the pale green moss shredded from their branches. The rain lashed my face, breath-taking, cold.



In Patagonia the mountains are to the west, the plains to the east; in Tierra del Fuego the mountains are to the south, the plains to the north. The British were the first foreigners to come, for they saw that the land and the weather were good for sheep raising.

Soon the fences became longer, and the sheep increased. The villainous Onas, who had not been advised of the new arrangements for their land, stole ten per cent of the sheep in the early years. The vast plains were taken over by several small independent farmers and one huge company, the Explotadora. Everyone who was anyone was British. In the middle of nowhere wire fences enclose small cemeteries, where the headstones read *Donald McDonald, aged two months . . . Ann, beloved wife of Jack Wynne . . . Señora Wallace.* The Explotadora functioned in a splendidly feudal way. Its general manager was king, and Punta Arenas was his St. James's. He told local governors what to do and when to do it. Its estancia managers lived in the style usually associated with the British in India, and for four months of the year—once the rams had been put to the ewes—there was nothing to do. Except drink.

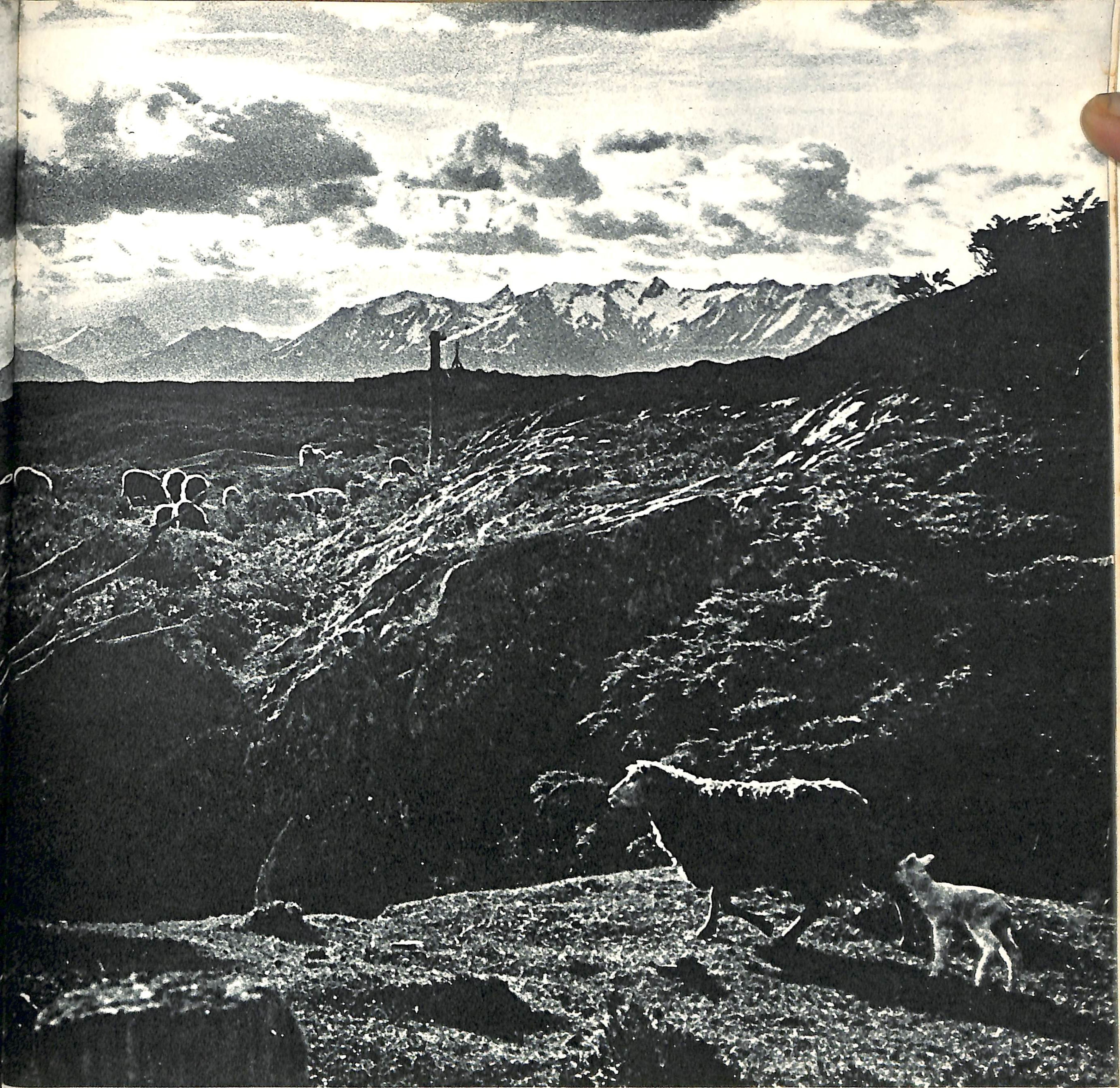
All that has gone. The company is racing to catch up with the times. It has changed its name to Ganadera, which means stock-raising. It has closed the big houses, dismissed the managers, and given their jobs to the sub-managers for less money. All the while the company is shrinking, as its leased land is steadily being resumed by the government in the land-reform programme.

The de Bruynes are prominent among the independents. Bernard de Bruyne's father, of an old Huguenot family, started farming at Rio Verde, seventy miles west of Punta Arenas, in 1891. Bernard now farms 40,000 acres, shears 20,000 sheep, and keeps 500 head of cattle. He is an upright man, of a military appearance, which is not surprising as he served in the Royal Artillery in both World Wars.

A light drizzle fell while he showed me round his farm. He climbed nimbly up



THE CALM FACE OF TIERRA DEL FUEGO



The climate of the island is usually unkind. The trees—those that survive—are hardy; shaped by the wind, they hug the ground. The sheep are sturdy, too, and thrive in spite of the climate

a ten-foot fence to point out the marvellous view south over Skyring Water (or where the view would have been if we'd come yesterday, when it wasn't raining). Proudly his fingers spread the deep, crinkled, oily fleece from a prize-winning four-toothed two-year-old Corriedale ram. Wooden post and flower petal, horse's skin and blade of new-sown grass, all he touched with care and love. He is a patriotic and distinguished English gentleman who spends half his year in Sussex, but no Chilean could love this southern land more.

Back in Punta Arenas the wind blew stronger from the west. The flags whipped and strained at their bending poles. A tin roof section whirled over the town like a drunken witch. A mysterious cloud darkened the sky and the trees bent and thrashed. At the mole the ships banged against the pilings. In the Strait a four-masted coal hulk snubbed her graceful nose to the anchors.

It has always been a hard world for women. Among the Yahgans, after the men had gone ashore with the catch and the firewood and the skins for the windbreak, it was the women's job to paddle the canoe out, tie it to the kelp beds as protection against theft: then jump overboard and swim ashore.

Anne Piggott came here as a nineteen-year-old bride from New Zealand, incapable, as she cheerfully admits, of boiling an egg. Michael Piggott farms 13,000 acres on the Big Island—as in-people call Tierra del Fuego. Now she bakes bread, preserves what fruits she can raise, cures bacon, ham, and beef. In emergency the oil company's hospital is a mere seventy miles away.

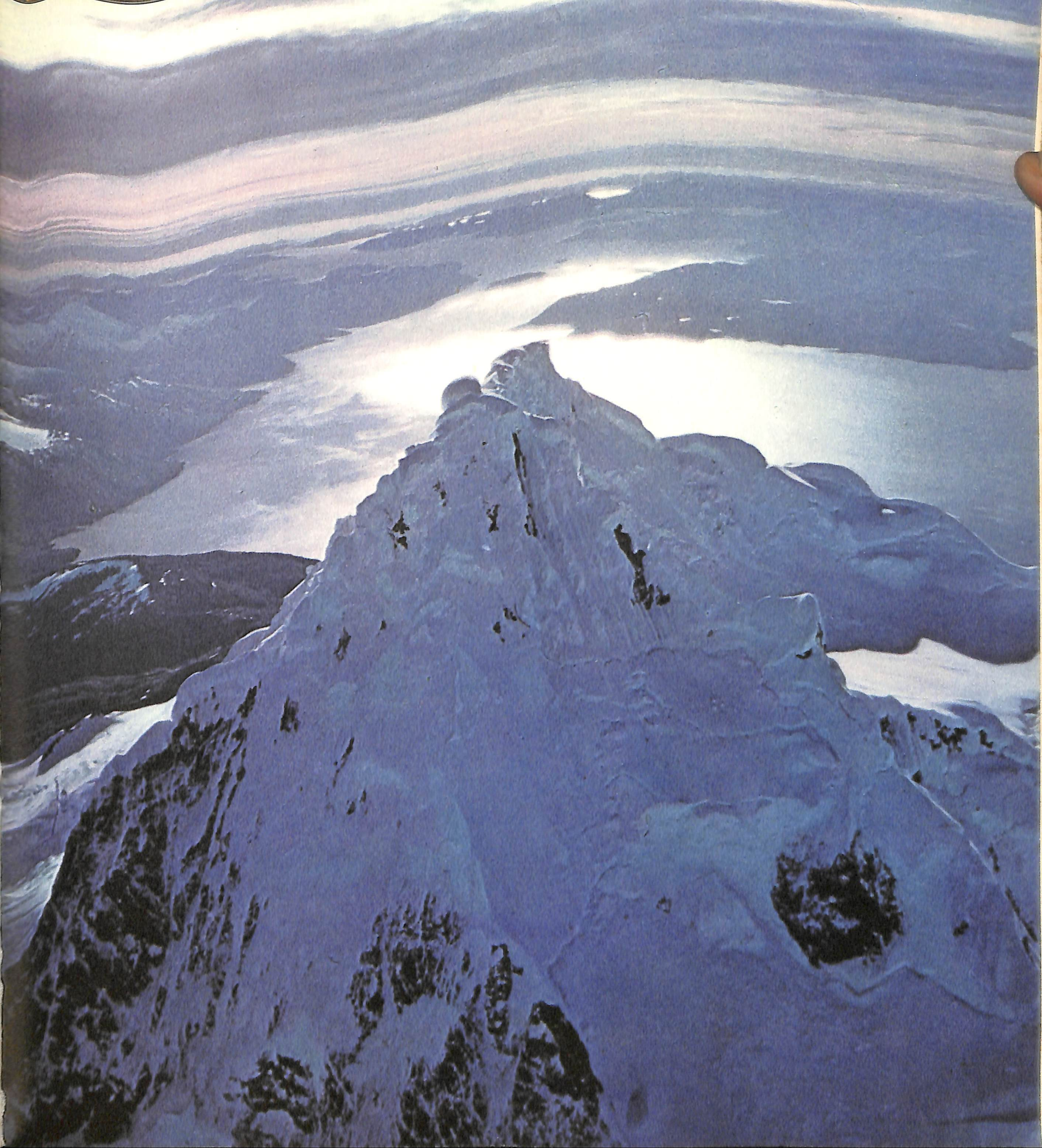
'I grow flowers,' she said. 'I love flowers. I try to grow antirrhinums, larkspur, clarkia, pansies, roses . . . Then the wind comes. It blows from the west for two weeks without stopping, at fifty, sixty miles an hour. Then it blows suddenly from the east for a day. The flowers can't stand it. They break.'

The Serkas' farm stands at the head of the remote fjord of Yendegaia, ice-green from the melting glacier water that flows into it. All Buba Serka's children were born there, without doctor or midwife. She buys her household supplies once a year, and the Navy brings them, as it takes out their wool.

Everywhere the houses are covered with painted sheet metal and roofed with corrugated iron. It looks dreadful, but nothing else will keep out the wind. The brilliant yellow of a barn, the scarlet of a roof, shout for warmth and recognition in this country of the huge dull skies. There is no time and no background for 'taste', even where there is money. I kept being stirred by nostalgic memories of railway colonies in up-country Anglo-India—the gimcrack chairs and unstable tables, the faded and dirty curtains, the canned food come long ago in rusty ships from some forgotten Home, the exposed wires and naked light bulbs and chipped, random glasses; and something always going wrong with the charging engine.

The green shimmer of Yendegaia Bay began to darken. A dull roaring filled the air, lasting for a full minute. Then, with no further warning, the wullie-wa struck. The surface of the sea, which had been rippled by wavelets and echoes from the main channel, cowered still, sullen and flat down. Trees pressed to the earth, their ribs

Tierra del Fuego's snow-covered peaks. In 1741 Richard Walter, who sailed with Anson, wrote of the 'prodigious precipices' which cause Cape Horn's violent weather





cracking, but you could hear nothing under the bellow of the wind. The little steamship keeled hard to port. After thirty seconds the sounds died away, the wavelets reformed, the steel ship righted itself.

In Punta Arenas when friends meet they don't say 'How do you do'; they say 'Baa'. The Chilean province of Magallanes, which includes all this southern tip of their country, holds nearly three million sheep, which is an awful lot of mutton chops. It is an awful lot of sheep, too, considering that in many parts the farmer has to clear trees and dense scrub to make pasture; not forgetting to leave rows of scrub crosswind to provide windbreaks for the grass. There is quite a bit of sheep rustling, mainly in Patagonia.

The local people like to barbecue sheep on Sundays, but otherwise to refuse lamb is the first sign of your family's increasing wealth and social status. The sheep are all Corriedales, a Lincoln-Merino cross, and they are strong, handsome animals.

The sheep are run in fenced pastures, not on the European open-range pastoral system. There is not much work in winter, and land reform has not helped the situation, because the new, small farms are worked by the owners and their immediate families. The old bachelor farm-hands of the type that the Explotadora used to employ wander the country, looking for jobs that are not there. They are called *pasajeros*, and ride the trails on one horse, leading a pack-horse carrying their belongings. Ponchos protect them from the weather and half a dozen dogs follow at heel.

The fitful sunlight vanished under a cloud. I turned up the collar of my windjacket— but the rain only lasted a little while. After that it turned to hail, for a few minutes. The wind kept blowing.

In 1945, after fifty-three years of drilling and geological research, oil was discovered in the wastes of Tierra del Fuego. This is the only oil so far found in Chile. The deposit is not large, and few oil installations are visible. Nevertheless here and there one does see ostriches and grey geese called *caiquenes* grazing among the silver-sheened pipes. At night, lonely orange flares re-baptize the Land of Fire. (Magellan actually called it the Land of Smoke, because the Onas lit signal fires to warn each other of the coming of his strange, huge vessels. Land of Fire, *Tierra del Fuego*, sounded better to some later image seller.)

At Sombrero, the oil monopoly's headquarters, the hard hats can exorcize the surrounding empty pampa with league competitions in football, volleyball, ping-pong, athletics, clay-pigeon shooting, tennis, basketball and swimming. For recreation there is a supermarket and a triple-arched pleasure dome as stately as any in Xanadu, and rather more remote; it contains courts for basketball, a sybaritically heated Olympic swimming pool, bowling lanes, and a large conservatory filled with quiet water and lush tropical plants. There is much plate glass. The llamas look in and the hard hats look out, but they don't have much to say to each other.

Fishing boats off Tierra del Fuego. Sailors use the Magellan Straits, which separate the islands from the mainland of Patagonia, to avoid the hazards of Cape Horn

The light turned from pale lilac to dull crimson to apoplectic purple. Clouds massed and banked over the high A of the modernistic church, touching with livid metal the flowers in the careful gardens, the careless grass beyond the fence. A gust of wind blew down from the clouds and thunder grumbled like distant artillery toward the Magellan Strait. Rain began to fall.

After the Yahgans and the British and the sailors, after the sheep and the hard hats, came the tourists. Jet loads of American ladies, their heads in tulle bags, arrive to see the southernmost whatever: city—Punta Arenas; town—Ushuaia, in Argentina; post-office—Puerto Williams, where the airport bus is an open whaleboat rowed by Chilean bluejackets. One can charter a flight to Cape Horn and back. The raw material of tourism abounds—fjords, lakes, mountains, wild life, sport fishing, glaciers that run into the very sea half a mile wide and several hundred feet thick with blue ice. But there is no tourist substructure, and many swampy problems have to be dealt with before even the foundations can be made firm.



This old Yahgan woman lives on the inhospitable shores of the Beagle Channel. Her face reflects the defeat and despair of her people. Of the three aboriginal tribes found by the earliest white settlers in Tierra del Fuego, one is already extinct

Everywhere roads described as *esplendido* are unsurfaced ribbons of corrugated mud or stone. Windscreens crack, gravel flies in through the windows, and your feet ache from the pebbly tattoo beating on the underside of the car. LAN, the Chilean airline, finds passengers a serious nuisance in the running of an efficient operation. Travel agencies promise but do not always perform. 'The area of the Pacific channels, 80 miles away, can be visited in boats,' the tourists' pamphlet says; but the packet ships run seldom, and there are no boats for hire or charter.

But the sea urchins and king crabs are magnificent (until lawless fishing wipes them out). Chilean *aji* is a good spice, the hottest I know. *Pisco* is an excellent grape alcohol to keep out the cold, and costs about ten shillings a bottle compared with £4 for Scotch. I noticed a shop window containing only cans of powdered ginger and bottles of artificial black walnut flavouring; but what arcane Magellanic stew this can be the base of, I was afraid to find out.

There is a general vagueness, sometimes unimportant, but always potentially disastrous when the tourist has to come such enormous distances. The 'beautiful oak forests' are beeches. The partridge and pheasant are not *gallinaceae*, but members of the ostrich family. Salmon fishing is advertised, but there are no salmon, neither Pacific nor Atlantic, only good sea-run brown trout, rainbows and smelts.

Metropolitan civilization is represented by Punta Arenas. Here two modern buildings, plus the cathedral and the fading rococo splendours of the Union Club, stand in the middle of two square miles of tin shacks on a sloping moraine beside the steel waters of the Magellan Strait. It is no longer called Sandy Point, as it was in the great British days, and it is no longer a great social centre for the British exiles. The Bank of London and South America is still there, and Wilson and King are still there, but now most of the visible names are such as Bozinovic, Livacic, Casa Diaz, Saint Michele, Bacigalupi, Casa Gandhi. There is a small Indian community, all relatives of a man who came here in 1912 from Sind, in what is now West Pakistan.

In the slums, which lie up the slope and along the shore, under the bitter wind and the ceaseless rain, poverty struggles against the fantastic Chilean and human



Trees that have given up the perpetual struggle against the elements, where sky and sea meet often in a sheet of water. The wind can blow from the west, non-stop, at fifty miles an hour for days, then switch overnight to the east

pride, and is, for the moment, defeated. Ramshackle huts the size of dog kennels, sleeping a dozen, are painted heliotrope and orange, scrubbed clean, girdled with flowers and topped with the Chilean national flag, and a smile. The sides of the unpaved streets are full of oil-marred fleeces, torn paper, broken bottles, and scavenging dogs and beggars. The tundra begins up the hill, just behind the town.

Rio Grande, the capital of Argentine Tierra del Fuego, faces a muddy foreshore and an almost invisible, distantly crawling sea. It has wide, sketched-in boulevards, an enormous colony of seagulls, and, perhaps, a future, for the country to the south is very beautiful.

Today something is seriously wrong. I am standing in an immense grassy plain, wearing whipcord trousers, heavy boots, wool shirt, sweater and windjacket and snow cap, ear flaps down . . . I am hot, that's what's wrong. The sun is shining. There is no wind. The grass ripples silently past the skinned dead cow, the graves of the forgotten shepherds, the whale bones above the tide.

With few exceptions, the works of man here are ugly and ramshackle. Man himself, whether encountered in shack or estancia, on deck or horseback, is

simple, resilient and interesting. Best of all is the land, breathing the exhilaration of far, wild places. On the scrub-covered pampa the ostriches, grey plumed, move away with long strides, heads up, and only break into a run, their useless wings fluffed out like dragging petticoats, if you run after them for a photograph.

Round a sudden bend, under the incredible 7,000-foot rock horns of the Paine Towers, five llamas stand in the dusty road, their coats warm chestnut and white, small long-stalked heads raised, huge liquid eyes questioning. The buck gives the sharp parrot cry of an order and they trot over the crest on soft, padded camel feet. A gaucho passes, trotting behind a point of sheep, head up and black hat curled up by the wind, man and horse one easy flowing line and two dogs trotting silently at the flank of the point. A movement in the scrub catches the eye. Two foxes, silver touched and black tipped, leap out behind a black rabbit, and seize it. Owls survey us, impassive, hugely yellow-eyed, from the grass ten feet away.

And the hawks! They stand on the telegraph poles and fence posts, and the



Round-up of horses on the great plains of Tierra del Fuego. Apart from livestock breeding, there is some industry—coal, oil and lumber

beech trees permanently warped by the wind. On the wind they hover: to west and south under their wings ice glitters along the horizon. From some dead thing in the rocks twelve birds rise. Nine are big carrion eaters, wings perhaps four or five feet in spread. They rise fast, thick eagle-necked, proud-eyed and beaked. The other three birds rise with long effort, like heavily loaded airliners. They are black, bald-necked, white ruffed, twelve feet across the spread of the narrow wings—giant condors of the Andes.

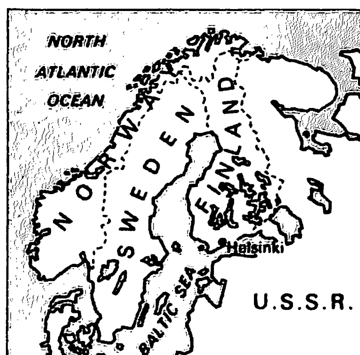
The good weather could not last. Behind the circling condors, beyond the channels named by English seamen in wooden ships, beyond the last rock claimed by Chile or Argentina, the clouds began to tower in architectural masses, slowly obliterating mountain and pampa and running river. The wind murmured in the grass, its tone rising. The grass stirred, the smoke blew flat from the lonely tin hut, the sheep turned their backs. The weather came, Cape Horn weather, from beyond the end of the earth.



WALTER BACON

Steam heat in Lapland

During the last few years the sauna bath has spread south and west across Europe from Scandinavia. An Englishman teaching English in Finnish Lapland finds that the sauna north of the Arctic Circle is more a way of life than merely a method of getting clean



EVERY NATION has its particular point of joy, a time in the week and an activity to which it looks forward: in Finland this is the *sauna*, a kind of bath, and the time is usually Friday or Saturday evening. In Lapland the effect of the *sauna* is greatest, for surely only in Lapland is the human body expected to stand a change of temperature from the boiling point of water down to twenty degrees Centigrade of frost—or more.

The *sauna* exists throughout Finland in different forms, private and public, but it is at its most picturesque in the country areas. There are, in Finland, between 60,000 and 70,000 lakes. Many are lonely pools with no one living there; others have perhaps one or two people in scattered dwellings round them; and others again, near the popular tourist centres, are thickly populated and have hotels within easy access.

One of the most typical sights in Finland, which could be seen at any of these places, is a tiny house built near the water's edge. It looks, from the outside, as though it might contain one room, or possibly two small ones, and has a porch at the front with a long seat facing the lake. It is, of course, of wood, and from its door a long pier of the same material runs into the lake, with at the end some steps going down into the water.

This is a *sauna*, and if it is in action its chimney will be smoking.

If you open the door you enter first a neat, plainly-furnished room with a bench round the walls, a few clothes-hooks, a table, and a mirror. This is the dressing-room; here, if you are going to the *sauna*, you take your clothes off, and walk naked with bowl, soap and scrubbing-brush through the second door which leads into the heart of the building.

There is usually a thermometer in this room, and it will probably be standing at between eighty and a hundred degrees Centigrade. It is quite possible that it may be as high as 110, or well over boiling point. The effect of such tremendous heat is at first alarming: one feels it impossible to bear for more than a second or two. The first time I went into a *sauna* I thought that the hairs in my nostrils were being singed off.

Two things strike the eye in this main part of the *sauna*—a row of big wooden

steps, perhaps a foot high and big enough to sit or lie on, and in one corner a metal oven with stones on top. Somewhere will be buckets or basins and in the middle of the floor an opening for water. This is one of the beauties of the *sauna*: there is no need to be afraid of splashing since all the surplus will go down the drain.

The English bath is a private occasion, but the *sauna* is essentially social. A certain time is set apart for men, and another for women, and usually several people go together. The first thing a Finn does on entering the hot part of the *sauna* is to take water in a metal scoop and throw it on to the hot stones above the oven. There is a hiss as the water is instantly vaporized and the steam rises. Those taking the *sauna* then spread themselves out on the steps, which go up nearly to the ceiling, and relax.

There is a considerable difference in temperature between floor and ceiling, so that one can, to some extent, control the fierceness of the effect. The heat soaks into the muscles and there is a wonderful feeling of comfort and harmony. The moisture on the surface of the body increases, being partly perspiration and partly condensation of the water vapour in the atmosphere, and one begins to think about going to wash.

Before doing this one often birches oneself. Stated baldly, this sounds horrifying; in practice it is very mild and pleasant. The birch whisks used are soft and leafy, producing no more than a pleasant tingling; a number of them are usually stored ready near the entrance, giving a clean woody fragrance to the air. After the birching and the washing comes the climax of the *sauna*, the sudden sharp descent into cold. One flings open the wooden door, rushes along the pier, and jumps into the lake.

This sudden extreme change of temperature is not, at first, noticed by the body as such: provided it has been sufficiently hot in the *sauna* the skin registers the water not as cold, but as caressing and velvety. Some cool themselves like this before washing, returning for further heat to the *sauna*. Enthusiasts do this as many as four times. After the *sauna* one rests for a while, gazing at the sunset from the porch if it is summer; then one drinks—for one is very thirsty—tea, coffee, fruit juice, or stronger drinks according to taste.

That is the country *sauna*. The town *sauna* is not so appealing, since usually in the town the dip in the lake must be replaced by a cold wash down. But in either country or town the *sauna* represents much more than a bath, much more even than a social occasion. It has, to the Finn, something positively spiritual about it: 'After *sauna* one feels clean both inside and out.' It also is a custom one must not interrupt; it would be fatal to arrange a social event on a night which people habitually reserved for *sauna*.

The *sauna* is also supposed to have beneficial effects on the health. 'What tar, spirits and the *sauna* cannot cure,' said the old Finns, 'is beyond our power to deal with.' I have, certainly, known a cold vanish after *sauna*, almost as though it had been sucked out; it felt also as though it had taken with it all my reserves of energy.

I went to my very first *sauna* before Arja and I were married. I had to go alone; and to walk naked into an entirely strange experience strips one of a considerable amount of self-confidence. This was one of the old type of smoke *sauna*, in which a fire is lighted in the *sauna* for some time, and the smoke is then allowed to escape

through a hole in the roof before those using it go in. This is by some considered even better than the modern *saunas*. Unfortunately in this case the smoke had not properly escaped; I stumbled through a murky mist in which dim naked forms were wandering about, and thankfully emerged after the minimum possible time.

My second *sauna* was much pleasanter–in a country place by the side of a lake.

What never occurred to me in those days, however, was that the *sauna* could become a regular part of the weekly routine, and what is perhaps most unusual for an Englishman–that I should experience it as a family affair. The basic *sauna* routine sets aside one period for men and another for women; but families with young children usually have a special time to themselves. For a long time in Lapland we had no *sauna* of our own, and were hence dependent on the charity of kind friends.

The first such were Eetu and Maija, the chief officer of the commune and his wife. They lived in one of a number of flats in the same building as the commune offices; down in the basement was the *sauna*. Between three and four o'clock on a Saturday afternoon Arja and I would go along, taking with us a bag containing bath-coats, soap, and scrubbing-brushes. Usually Maija would greet us, then after a few minutes Eetu would come in dressed in a bath-coat and with a cheery look in his eye. Our turn had arrived and we would dive down to the cellar and start on the operation. The cellar *sauna* in the commune offices was a good one, though not so romantic as the lakeside type; and from it one could not go to swim. We finished by sluicing ourselves down with as much cold water as seemed appropriate, dressing, then calling out in a loud voice as we went upstairs, *'Sauna vapaa!'* ('The *sauna's* free!').

Maija often gave us a bottle of fruit juice to drink down below and there was always tea waiting when we came up. One needs plenty of liquid after the *sauna* since so much of the body water has been lost in perspiration.

We frequently walked up the stairs to the flat in our bath-coats and dressed up there.

Sometimes we went to the *sauna* owned by Henni, the chemist. This was a wooden building standing at the back of the chemist's shop. It was spacious inside, but unfortunately not very warm. One of the most elegant *saunas* was under the control of the chief forester, Martti Mäenpää, and his wife Helvi. From the back of the house in which he lived one walked across a small bridge and found the *sauna* standing like a little cottage just above the river. In the same building there lived an elderly woman who was under contract to do our washing. The *sauna* can serve more purposes than one; it is frequently used for laundry. In the past, in remote districts, children were frequently born in the *sauna*. It was the warmest place, the only place where hot water and privacy could be obtained, and the place which could most easily be cleaned. When the settlers returned to Lapland after the war, they built their *saunas* first and in some cases lived in them till the rest of the house was ready.

Some customs, which look perfectly natural when one is in one country, would seem very strange if transposed to another. It might, in England, give rise to some misunderstanding if one rang up a friend and said: 'How about coming round

for a bath on Saturday evening?' But in Finland an invitation to the *sauna* is quite a common form of social activity; and afterwards the party sit round and drink coffee, rosy-red, with towels round wet hair.

It was the family aspect of the *sauna,* however, which led to one of our big problems. One day when our daughter Lilian was a few months old, Arja said: 'I think we ought to take Lilian to the *sauna.*' I was taken aback at this idea; putting Lilian into that terrific temperature seemed almost as bad as allowing her to sleep outside in the freezing cold. Arja pointed out that most children went from a very early age. I felt extremely doubtful; it was a matter on which advice was difficult to obtain since most people in Lapland would have said: 'Of course you should take the child to the *sauna*—mine went when they were far younger'; while most people in England would have looked on it as practically equivalent to murdering the girl.

Arja herself had some doubts, not having previously taken a young child to the *sauna;* she said that she would like to have someone there who was experienced in taking babies to *saunas.* I said firmly that one of the human rights a father possessed was to see what happened the first time his child went to the *sauna;* and this right I would by no means give up.

This resulted in a deadlock for some time. In the end, though with some nervousness, we simply took her along. We need not have worried; she accepted the *sauna* quite naturally. A young child may, indeed, find in the warmth of the *sauna* a pleasant reminder of its unborn life. For a child, too, there is a very pleasant freedom in this way of washing—it can play around with water, spill it on the floor, or tip the bowl over its head without anybody worrying.

Once she had been admitted to the *sauna* ceremonies, Lilian rapidly came to dominate them. She would be warmly wrapped up on a winter Saturday afternoon, and placed on the *kelkka*—the little chair with runners—with the *sauna* equipment in a bag behind. The size of the bag seemed to have at least doubled since Lilian had joined the party. Then we would set off, one of us walking and the other pushing the *kelkka,* with Lilian's face peeping out of the red hat that went over her ears, and Lilian shouting at the top of her voice:

'Saunaan! saunaan!' ('To the *sauna*! to the *sauna*!).

Inside the *sauna,* the father of the child was expected to wash as quickly as possible and then stand by in the dressing-room to receive his daughter. She came out pink and hygienic and was wrapped in her own bath-coat with a special cap to cover the hair. She was then whisked off and dressed upstairs. That night she usually slept well.

In the coldest weather Lilian did not go to the *sauna;* and below a certain temperature Arja herself would look doubtful.

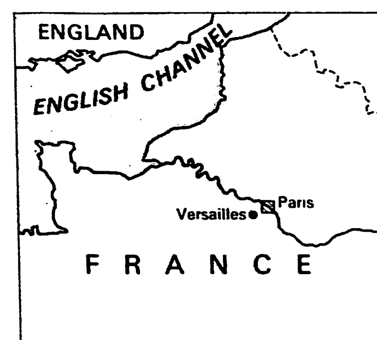
'Do you think it is too cold to go today?' she would ask me, glancing at the thermometer, which stood at minus twenty-five. But what could I answer? According to the traditions in which I had been brought up the effect of having a *sauna* at all should have been calamitous. It apparently was not, but I felt I could not weigh up the effect of any further changes in the conditions.

A woman is supposed to be at her most beautiful two hours after the *sauna.* Unfortunately at that time she is usually putting her hair in pins.



The Sun King's palace

The last decades of the seventeenth century saw the transformation of a hunting lodge at Versailles into a palace which has never been surpassed in splendour. Built by Louis XIV as a monument to his own glory and a home for his enormous court, it is now enjoyed by millions from all over the world



TWELVE MILES west of Paris, in a vast and romantic park, stands the noblest palace of the Western world. Enriched by three centuries of pageantry and art, visited yearly by millions of people from all over the globe, Versailles is a monument to the glory of France.

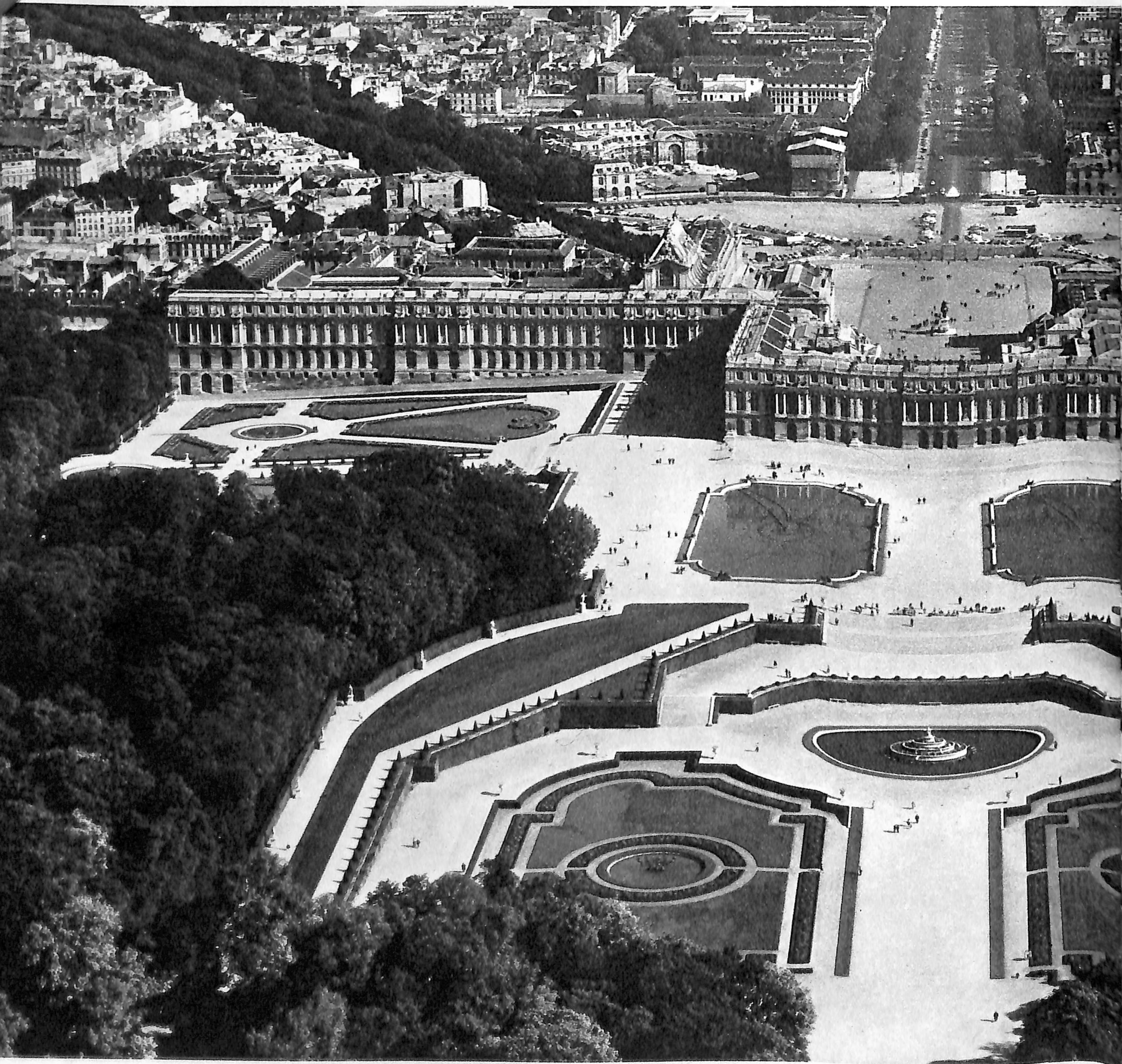
Versailles was created by the Bourbon kings to show all Europe the supreme power of France, a power expressed in terms of beauty. A less likely site for a pleasure palace could hardly have been chosen—marshy, sandy, without sources of water. But the small castle first built here by the woman-hating Louis XIII was intended only as a retreat from his Paris court. It was after his death in 1643, when the crown went to his son, that the court came to Versailles.

Young Louis XIV, handsome, regal and courteous to the humblest, took seriously what he called 'the business of being a king'. He not only believed, like most of France in the seventeenth century, in the divine right of kings, but also that this right carried with it a duty to build magnificently and live splendidly. So, through most of the seven decades of his reign, and longer, the noise of hammering and scraping seldom ceased. As many as 35,000 workmen at a time were employed, and millions of gold francs poured out. What had been a marshy waste became a formal fairyland, offering miles of groves and walks, hundreds of statues and fountains—and a palace which at times housed 10,000 people.

Here the 'Sun King' moved like the star of a grandiose play, constantly on display. Just as he was sure that his power descended from God's own, so he believed that his subjects should have 'free and easy access' to their ruler. Therefore, all those 'of decent appearance' might come to gaze in awe upon the king at table as he made his way, solitary and superb, through course after lavish course. The gardens, the state rooms, the long Hall of Mirrors with its solid silver furniture and its forty-two crystal chandeliers, were open to any man who showed himself a gentleman by wearing a sword—which could be hired from the doorkeeper.

But the rising and the setting of this royal sun were deemed so glorious that to witness them became the utmost privilege. Thus round the monarch's getting up

Louis XIV, on horseback, dominates the entrance court of Versailles. He assumed absolute power, moved the seat of government from St. Germain to Versailles, and created there the setting for a great monarch





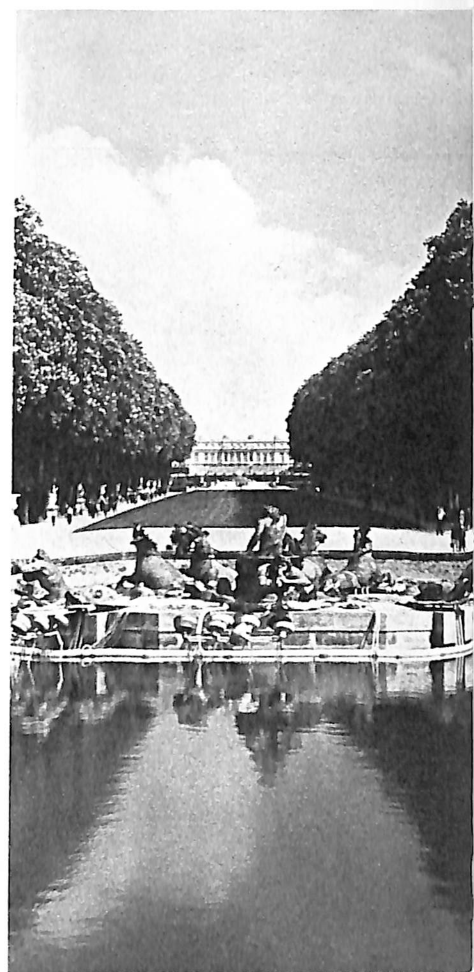
SYMMETRY FOR THE SUN KING

André Le Nôtre, who became surveyor-general of the royal works in 1657, designed not only the park at Versailles, which now covers 250 acres, but also the town, which the court and its hangers-on swelled into a population of 60,000. The symmetrical arrangement of the park was reflected in the town plan. Three avenues converged before the entrance courtyard and three more converged on the park at the back. The gardens provide a perfect setting for the palace, which Jules Hardouin Mansart redesigned in the classical style from 1678 to 1708. He created a completely new façade and framed it with two wings, bringing its length to 550 yards

and going to bed evolved an etiquette so rigid that a courtier's whole future could hang upon the slightest gesture from His Majesty. This etiquette went far beyond questions of precedence in entering or sitting down or knocking on a door. (You never knocked; you scratched with the little fingernail of the left hand.) And woe to him who was not present when the royal eye scanned the court, for the king astutely kept his nobles close about him and dependent on his favour. No other road to riches was open to them; to be exiled to one's estates was ruin. So all the aristocrats came thronging to Versailles, crowding the palace to its attics.

The scene of this spectacle of absolute monarchy was primarily the creation of three men: Louis XIV, the architect Mansart and the landscape gardener Le Nôtre. All were bent on making a stately world where art disciplined nature.

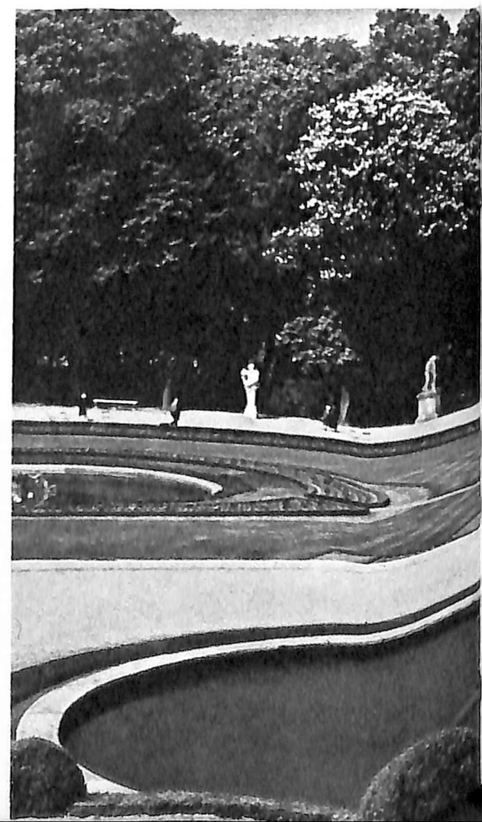
The core of the palace remains the small castle built by Louis XIII of stone and warm red brick, with its blue-grey leaded roof, gilded wrought-iron balcony and forecourt of marble. To this Louis XIV added harmoniously grouped pavilions and long wings built of pale stone, the whole reaching out in a gracious embrace towards the tall entrance gates of the cobbled court.



At the rear, no more moving perspective was ever created by the gardener's art—down from the wide façade of the palace step terraces adorned with flower beds, statues and gleaming expanses of water; down to the extended stretch of lawn called the green carpet; and beyond that, beyond the enormous Basin of Apollo to the mile-long grand canal shimmering into the soft blue distance.

Throughout the park, at various precise angles, run avenues inviting a stroll beneath close-set, towering horse-chestnuts, lindens and elms, their lower branches clipped like a wall, their loftier ones arching overhead. In each may be discovered some serene stone goddess, some colonnade or grotto or pavilion. An aching loveliness pervades the tranquillity.

But this can leap into spirited life. Versailles, built on a site without running water, had in the days of the Sun King 1,400 fountains. On this stubborn project Louis spent years and millions of francs, employing the ingenuity of the boldest engineers and putting some 30,000 of his soldiers to forced labour. At last, by a network of reservoirs, canals and subterranean conduits leading from sources many miles distant, the water gushed sparkling.



All ugliness of the outer world was shut away from Versailles. Here were to flourish only beauty and delight and homage to love. When, bored by the Infanta Maria Theresa of Spain, his good but dull little queen, Louis XIV lost his heart to Louise de la Vallière, he ordered the first of the fêtes which made Versailles more brilliant by night than by any sunshine. The summer darkness would be jewelled by thousands of lights among the trees, sparkling on dancing waters. Pageants produced by the playwright Molière, the composer Lully and other great artists would end in feasting and in fireworks so glorious that the whole sky seemed to fall in showers of light upon the enchanted spectators. When the gentle Louise lost her place as favourite, even more sumptuous festivals were arranged for her successor, the dazzling, golden Madame de Montespan.

But, as the fires of youth died out in Louis XIV, he turned to the intelligent, well-born widow who had been governess to his children, Madame de Maintenon. The amusements of Versailles became routine. The ageing monarch had become a family man. When the queen died he married the sedate widow, and spent most of

The fountain of Apollo is the most splendid in the gardens of the palace. Versailles has seen little change since the June day in 1789 when the deputies of the people, assembled in the tennis court, swore that they would not separate until France had a constitution. This oath became the charter of French liberty and led to the end of the monarchy and the birth of the Republic

his days in the graceful little palace, Trianon, which he had built in the park as a refuge from the very grandeur which had been his obsession.

Then within one month the old king lost a grandson, a granddaughter and a great-grandson. Sorrow and shadow filled the corners of the enormous palace. On September 1, 1715, after a reign of seventy-two years, the Grand Monarch himself met death, as he had lived, in majesty and in public.

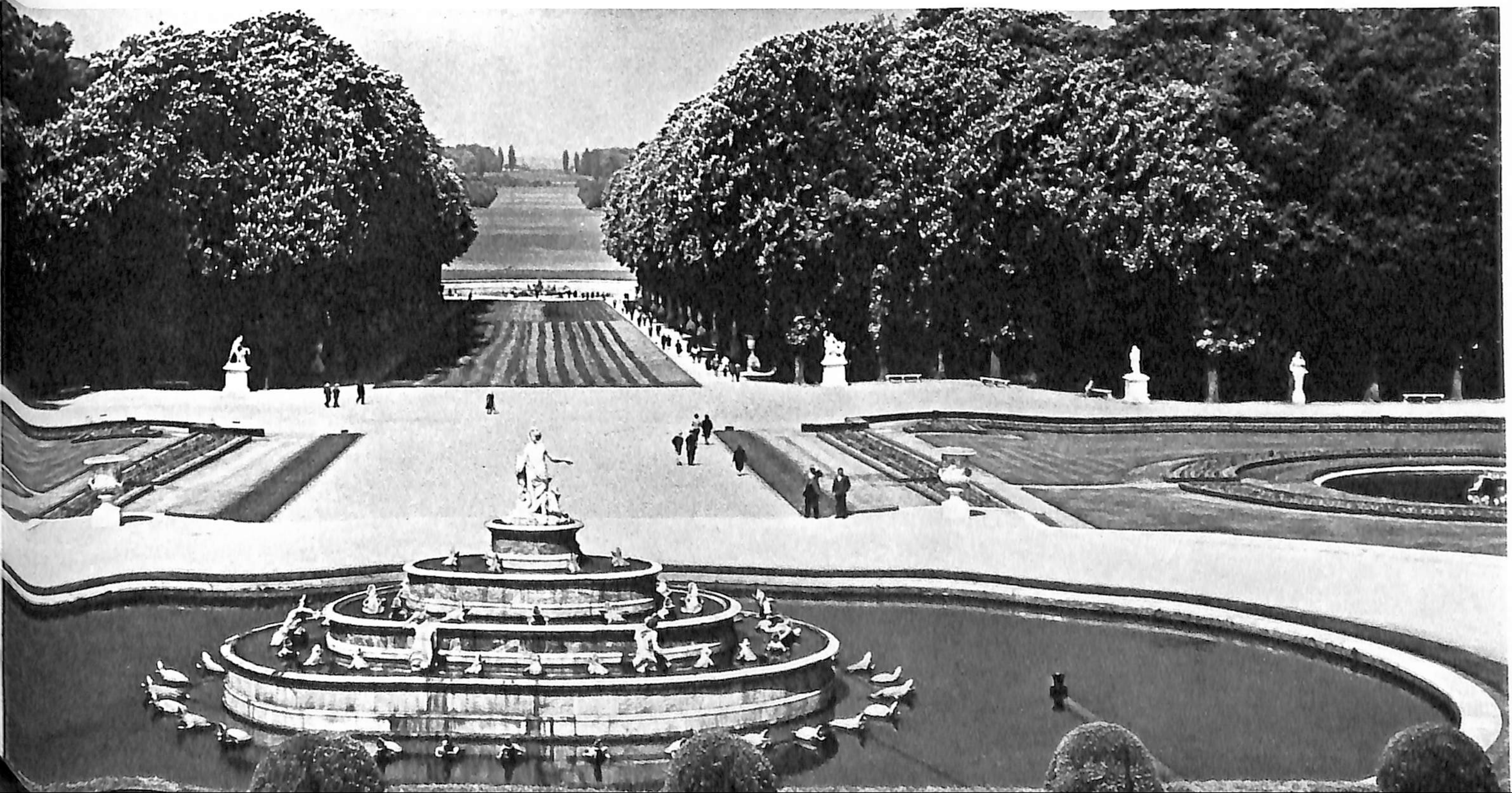
For seven years thereafter the ranked windows of the palace were blind with shutters, and blown leaves whispered across the empty terraces. The new little king, a child of five without parents, brother or sister, was kept in Paris. Not until he was thirteen was he brought to live at Versailles—a shy, proud, secretive boy. Once more the creaking machinery of court life began to revolve, the gardens bloomed, the fountains played. But Louis XV grew into a very different sort of man and king from his great-grandfather. Dutifully he performed the ceremonials of rising and retiring; he would, however, first get up by himself, or, having been put to bed in state, he would later slip away to sleep elsewhere.

For he had devised half a hundred small, intimate apartments in the palace, and there he passed his true life. These rooms were made charming by delicate carving and gay, flower-like colours, a new style fostered by the pretty and tasteful Madame de Pompadour. She, and not Louis XV's unhappy queen from Poland, was for almost twenty years the true mistress of Versailles.

The decorations at Versailles were largely the work of Charles Le Brun. They are dominated by scenes and figures recalling Apollo, the god of the sun, who symbolized Louis XIV himself. The statue of Apollo's mother Latona, with her children, stands at the centre of the fountain behind the palace, linking the decoration of the apartments with that of the garden

Like the king, she adored planning new buildings, gardens, alterations—notably a second small palace in the park, that gem called the Petit Trianon. But it all cost money. The workmen were sometimes not paid for a year and a half. Contractors who put their faith in royal orders were often ruined. On the outskirts of the radiant pleasure grounds lurked hunger and despair.

With the death of Pompadour and the coming into favour of the notorious Madame du Barry, the heedless expenditure continued. It has been calculated that of every ten francs collected in taxes, six were spent at Versailles.



And now to the French court came one whose very name still stands for frivolous extravagance. Marie-Antoinette, aged fourteen, pretty, gracious and empty-headed, was sent from Austria to become the bride of the Dauphin, a loutish lad of sixteen, the future Louis XVI. Since the dull boy was not much use as a husband, the girl, restless, frustrated, untaught, sought an outlet in reckless fun for which she was widely criticized. Then, when she was eighteen, Louis XV died of smallpox. At this moment, in some terrible presentiment, Marie-Antoinette and her husband clung together, crying that they were too young to reign.

But the Bourbon rule rolled on, heedless, like a great golden coach pulled by runaway horses. While the hungry populace growled, the saner revolutionary parties organized, seeking a stable government. The monarchy admitted itself bankrupt, and at Versailles futile little economies were ordered. But the mob grumbled more loudly, cursing Marie-Antoinette for troubles that had been gathering for generations of Bourbon extravagance. Then, on July 14, 1789, the Paris mob stormed that grim prison, the Bastille. Still the king noted in his diary, 'Nothing.' On October 5 the Paris mob reached the gates of Versailles.

That day was the last in the life of the thronged palace. All night the menacing crowd milled round it. In terror the royal family huddled together. Dawn found the mob calling with curses for 'the Austrian'. Gathering the courage which was never to leave her, Marie-Antoinette appeared on the central balcony in appeasement. But the mob clamoured to take the sovereigns back to Paris—the first step on the long road to the guillotine. As the royal family climbed into their carriage, the king turned to the nobleman who was left in charge. 'Try,' he begged sadly, 'to save my poor Versailles.'

But from that day Versailles went into a sorrowful decline. Almost overnight it was deserted. Lumbering wagons hauled away its furniture; the rooms were stripped of all the pretty trifles that gave them life. Weeds grew in the melancholy avenues, grass between the cobbles of the court.

The first head of the French state after poor Louis XVI to take real interest in Versailles was the Orléans king, Louis-Philippe. Well-meaning, if tasteless, he decided in the 1830s to turn the palace into an art museum.

To suit his purpose wondrous carvings were mutilated; a sickly grey-white paint was spread over gorgeous gilding and delicate varnishes; priceless paintings were cut or pieced out to fill wall spaces crowded with mediocrity. Versailles, once the proud model for many a castle throughout Europe, was now held in contempt as a relic of the bad old days. A final humiliation came in 1871 when, after France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War, the German Empire was proclaimed in Versailles's Hall of Mirrors.

But France and Versailles still breathed. In 1875 the country officially became a republic, by one vote, and it was at Versailles that the senate and chamber of deputies met. And twelve years later there came to this dreary museum a new curator, a young scholar and poet named Pierre de Nolhac.

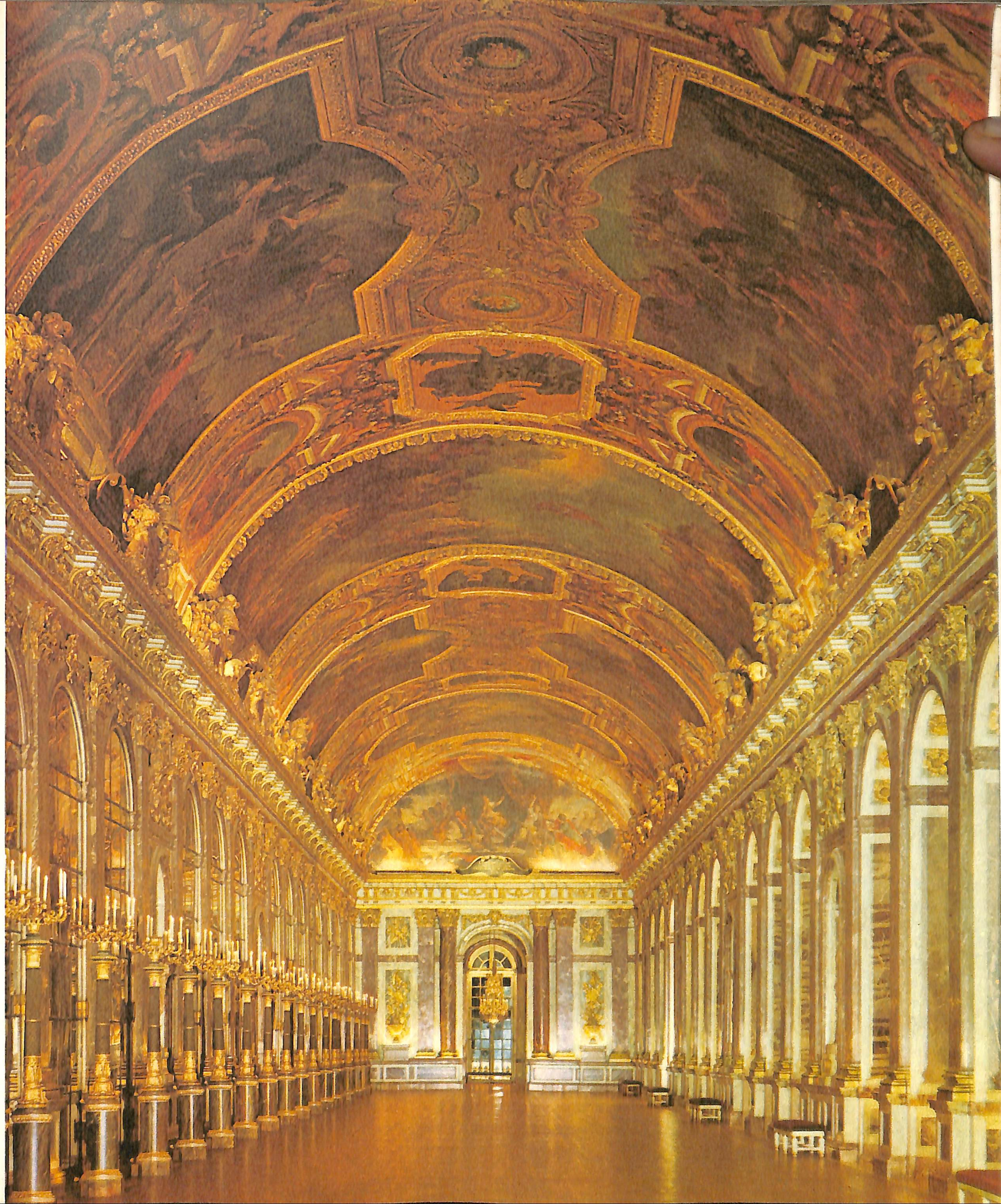
Now began the resurrection of Versailles. In the labyrinth of neglected rooms and attics, in the piles of dusty archives, de Nolhac found clues to the beauty that had once shone here. Little by little he pieced all this together, and the books he wrote on Versailles quickened the public to an appreciation of their heritage.

The end of the second World War brought new hope for the incomparable

The Hall of Mirrors, the scene of the creation of the German Empire in 1871 and of the signing of the peace treaty after the first World War, was designed by Hardouin Mansart and Le Brun. The magnificent view of the park from its seventeen windows is reflected in the mirrors on the opposite wall. The ceiling sparkles with gold and relates in allegorical form the glories of Louis XIV's reign



Louis XIV's glittering but rigid grandeur gave way in the eighteenth century to a more informal style of great charm. Louis XV's study, one of the small, intimate rooms at Versailles, contains panelling and furniture painted in vivid colours. The rococo style, with its motifs based on shells, rocks, foliage and flowers, spread throughout Europe





Louis XIV went to Mass every day in the Chapel Royal at Versailles. The royal box was directly connected with the king's private quarters, and faced the marble altar and gilded bronze reredos. The chapel has two storeys, the lower for officials and public, and the upper for the royal family and court

Splendour and beauty reign supreme in the gardens of the palace, which Voltaire once described as a 'great caravanserai filled with human misery and discomfort'. The two large rectangular pools in front of the façade are adorned with sixteen classical bronze statues

palace. Help for its restoration came from all over the world. The twenty-seven acres of roof were saved from collapse; room after room was cleaned of the dirty thick wash and painted again in flower colours; gilding again touched dulled ironwork to splendour.

Three years were spent restoring the Opéra Louis XV, and the Trianon and the Petit Trianon once again provide a charming contrast to the grandeurs of the main palace. The gardens are carefully maintained for the people of France, to whom this royal treasure belongs. On certain summer Sundays the fountains of Louis XIV play, as radiant as ever. Even the wonderful nights of fête, conceived by some of France's greatest artists, have returned, bringing revenues to aid in the restoration. By a play of light over and within the palace, by voice and music sounding throughout the dark garden, a spell is woven in which the 'Great Century' seems to come to life. And when the enchanted night is shattered by fireworks that fall to meet the leaping fountains, Versailles itself appears alive —indeed, immortal.





STEWART WAVELL

Theatre of shadows

All night long the shadow master of eastern Malaya controls his puppets in front of a light and behind a white cloth screen. The adventures and exploits of legendary kings and gods are known to all the audience, but their interest never flags as the tales go on for hour after hour



IN KOTA BHARU, capital of Malaya's Kelantan State, we never went to bed before midnight. Our minds throbbed to the wonder of gongs, rhythms, faces and colours thronging upon the inward eye, transforming processions of actors and puppets, dancers and shadow masters into symbols from all time. We would sit in the sand, crowded by children, watching the demons leap and soar and the great Hanuman, greatest leaper of them all, conquering the wicked genius of the Demon King of Lanka.

But before we had been baffled by too many shadow plays we had the remarkable good fortune to meet a 'To' Dalang', as the master of the shadow play is called, and the most experienced in all Kelantan. He was fifty-nine years old and began training as a shadow master at the age of twenty-two. He spent seven years intensively studying the art, learning by heart the many stories and incantations, and acquiring the dramatic sensibility which makes every shadow play an intense and personal experience for the beholder.

The shadow play was known in China in AD 200 when the spirit of the Han Emperor's favourite concubine was projected miraculously by a Taoist monk on to a white cloth screen. Possibly, the monk faked this effect, using knowledge brought back by early Chinese travellers from Indonesia where the shadow play had been in use for centuries as a simple form of morality play.

In Thailand we were to discover an ancient form of the shadow play known as the Nang Yai, using huge puppets, with characters sometimes in groups, but this again was likely to have come from Indonesia. Centuries ago, the Arabs took one version to Egypt. The rare Indonesian version, therefore, seemed to be most important to us and we had an opportunity of recording an entire performance one night in a village just outside Kota Bharu.

We found ourselves in a large compound just off the main road going north into Thailand. A special stage had been erected surmounted by a white screen. Behind it were seated the To' Dalang and the orchestra. As the audience quietly assembled in the darkness he began chanting a Muslim prayer with selected verses from the

The greatest of the shadow masters demonstrates the flexibility of elbow and wrist joints of a buffalo-hide puppet. This skilled shadow master can manipulate as many as fifty puppets in the course of a single performance



Children still throng to the shadow play, awed by the staccato narration of the shadow master, by the threat of drums and the shadowy forms enlarging and growing dim

Koran to purify his own spirit before calling the blessings of Allah upon the spectators. Then followed perhaps the most ancient prayer of all, passed down from each To' Dalang to his son for more than two thousand years. It was a prayer of salutation to the spirits of the four quarters—north, south, east and west.

There was an awesome silence among the crowd as the To' Dalang hammered his staccato instructions to the spirits, warning them that his remained the supreme power throughout the performance, and that no spirit must dare to disturb the continuity of the drama or the peace of the audience. The gongs sounded a silvery prelude and the show began.

The story which unfolded was set in the fabulous and legendary country of Ingkandiri (most probably in Sumatra). Ratu Deha, the childless king, makes a promise to the mighty god to slaughter forty big bulls if only he could be granted the blessings of children. The mighty god listens and the king's wife in the course of time produces three children, the first a daughter, Radin Galoh Chendra Krina; the second, a son, Radin Parabuan; and the third, a son, Radin Gunong Sari.

When the king's wife was having her first pregnancy, the king promised that if the child were a girl she would marry the great hero Cheke Wanang Pateh.

The children grew up, and when the daughter had reached the marriageable

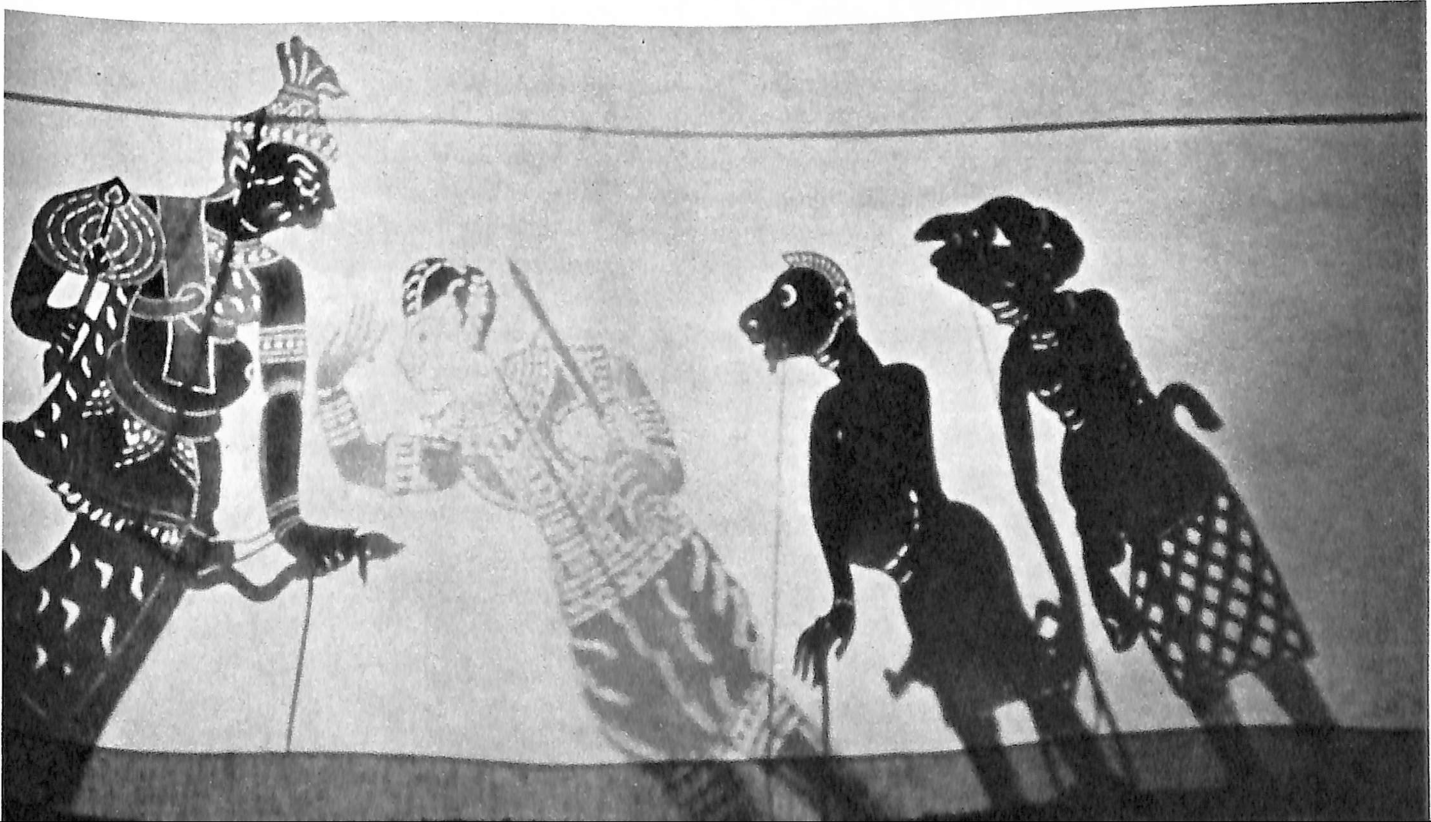
age of fifteen years, the king still showed no sign of keeping his promises, either to sacrifice the forty bulls, or to marry off his daughter to Cheke. So the good fairy, Dewa Sakti, came down from the good great land of Kayangan and disguised herself as the terrifying demon Bota Wila Sama, intending to entice the princess into the mysterious lands of the demon, the mountain known as Gunong Sila Maling.

The demon disguise was successful, and Dewa Sakti carried off the princess to a hiding place in the mountains, leaving the king and queen and the people of Ingkandiri grieving the loss of their beautiful princess. But soon the king heard news that it was the demon Bota who had stolen his daughter, so he assembled his subjects into an army and placed them under the command of his two sons to launch an attack upon the demon's stronghold.

After weeks of searching, the two sons returned with their armies and reported failure to the king. In despair, he promised his daughter's hand in marriage to the man who could recapture the princess and return her to the palace. Rulers from many countries resolved to find her, but all their efforts were in vain. The king instructed his minister to seek out Ino Kerta Pateh, for if any man could save the princess, it was he. But Ino could not be found. In his place, the minister produced the forgotten Cheke Wanang Pateh, the man to whom the king had promised the princess in marriage years before. The king was annoyed that Ino was not to be the rescuer and husband of his daughter, but he had no choice but to give his blessing to Cheke who set off with two attendants towards the mountain.

Soon they came upon the demon's footprints which led them to a cave. The attendants hesitated in fear, but Cheke, the hero, ordered them to enter and challenge the demon to come out and fight. No sooner had the echoes of the attendants' voices died, than the demon replied in a voice of thunder, so powerful in its reverberations that Cheke's two bodyguards were blown clean out of the cave; and the demon emerged to do battle with Cheke. So terrible was his appearance

Light shines through the puppets, which represent characters from the legendary court of Ingkandiri, thought to be Sumatra. Buffalo-hide puppets last a hundred years or more; but modern plastic substitutes fall to pieces in a few months



that the monkeys in the treetops and all other other creatures in the topmost branches fell to the ground in terror.

Then Cheke and Bota fought. Three times the demon hurled Cheke to the ground, but Cheke returned each time with greater fury to the battle. In a pause in the fighting, Cheke asked his attendants why Bota was so powerful. Was he just a demon or was he, in fact, someone disguised as a demon? One of the attendants replied that Cheke's opponent was in reality a disguised being, and his only chance of killing his adversary was by stabbing him on the fingernail. He should wait for the moment when the demon sought to swallow him up, and cut off his tongue at the base with a kris. Cheke, rearmed by this advice, awaited his opportunity, and soon Bota lay at his feet bleeding to death.

Then Cheke spoke to the remains of Bota, saying: 'If you are a person in disguise please now appear in your true form.' And thus Bota, throwing his cloak into the sea, appeared in the form of the good fairy Dewa Sakti. 'Who are you?' asked Cheke of the radiant fairy, but the fairy replied that no human being was permitted to know her name until the world came to an end. Then, before finally disappearing, Dewa Sakti asked Cheke to open his mouth, and spat on his tongue to give him a blessing.

Cheke then went up to the entrance to the cave, praying that he should find the princess inside, and to his joy the door opened and the princess emerged. He brought her safely back to the king and demanded that the king fulfil his promise; but the king refused, saying that he wanted the princess to marry Ino. Cheke told the king that Ino had died, and the king, believing him, consented to the marriage, and proclaimed his son-in-law, Cheke, as Raja Muda, successor to the throne of Ingkandiri.

This was the end of one evening's instalment. As you can imagine, there is trouble brewing between Ino and Cheke for the love of the princess. The audience knows this, and there will be intense speculation on how things will develop in the next instalment.

To be one of a Malay crowd gazing at a shadow screen in the darkness is to experience a thraldom approaching magic. To an imaginative people, a shadow can be more powerfully evocative than a character in a film. The mind clothes these exquisite shapes with entire worlds of meaning. The mere appearance of Kala, the devouring demon, may cause panic in the audience. Children scream and parents snatch them up in terror. That is why today Kala is rarely seen.

The setting of the *panggong*, or stage, is calculated to mystify. The shadow master and orchestra are concealed, and the triumph of their art is to mould the imagination, even hypnotize the audience, into believing in the awful reality of the drama. Sometimes the screen will sway gently in the night breeze, and the shadows will enlarge and grow dim. If a girl's eyes wander from the screen she sees the rapt gaze of her friends staring before them almost in trance. Beyond the circle of watchers the broad leaves of banana trees glisten with raindrops in the lamplight, and standing beneath, also spellbound, are mothers in their red and blue shawls. Lightning flickering among distant clouds and occasional growls of thunder add to the tension of the onlookers—a fitting backcloth to the superhuman world of shadows. The staccato commentary of the shadow master will continue with other stories long into the night.

STEWART WAVELL

The enchanted coast

Wide open to the full blast of the north-east monsoon between October and January, Malaya's east coast is a place of enchantment for the rest of the year. In the states of Trengganu, Pahang and Kelantan fishermen sail under the protection of ancient gods, while on shore the people gather to watch dance-combats or traditional court dramas



'THE SMOOTH JOURNEY across the water was an interlude of enchantment. The stars were close. The wash of the gliding ferry was bright with phosphorus, and gleaming fish leapt through the dark, falling round us with luminous plops. The breeze was warm, and we stood in a tired silence of wonder, half expecting the stars to sing and the fish to talk.' This is how one traveller described the mood of the legendary east coast states of Pahang, Trengganu and Kelantan.

The traveller in a hurry will probably fly to Kuantan, or perhaps drive up the fast road from Singapore; but ideally he should go up the winding road from Kuala Lumpur through the mountains and jungles of Pahang. The journey is longer, but the giant trees are a preparation for what is to come. From Kuantan the road leads north. On the right the palms, feathery casuarinas and spiky screw-pines provide a tantalizing screen whose gaps reveal glimpses of golden beaches pounded by the white surf breakers of the China Sea. The Malay fishing villages, raised on stilts, provide oases of shadow in the hot sun. At night, while moonlight silvers the palms, fires flare in the darkness and the air is filled with the scent of musk and the sound of drums.

Malays, with their soft speech and bright sarongs, will often foregather to watch the shadow play, or perhaps the graceful dance-combat of *silat*, the Malay art of self-defence.

In Trengganu with its 600 mosques the traveller may lie awake on the sands for the giant turtles to appear. The islands of Redang are the *semangat*, or soul, of Trengganu. There among the coral depths one can peer down through transparent waters and see formations of fish like black bombers swimming thirty feet below. By day hunters scale the cliffs in search of the nests from which birds'-nest soup is made, while by night the flares of fishing boats spread a line of flame across the horizon.

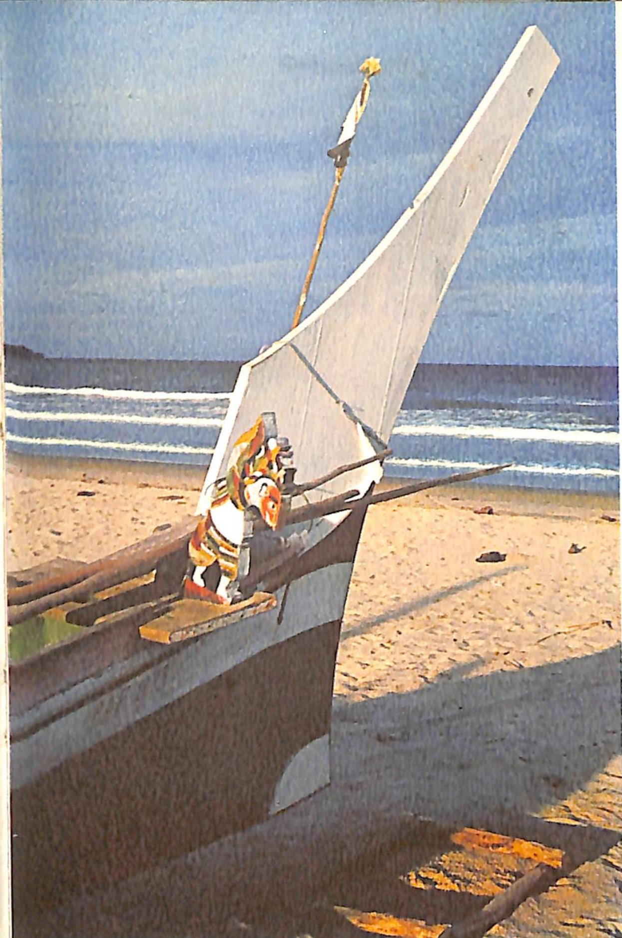
In Kelantan, 'Land of Lightning', there are not only shadow plays and *silat*, but Thai operas and Malay court dramas, village contests of songs and kites and spinning tops. When the royal drums re-echo among the hills, it is a reminder that power over the spirits of the points of the compass lies in the fingertips of the man who plays the red, green and gold *rebab*.



A Malay girl's treasure—a clam shell found that morning on the white sand of her small island far out in the China Sea. The black outline of the uninhabited island of Redang can be seen in the background as the wind tosses the palms, heralding a storm

The prow of a fishing boat carved in traditional shape. The graceful design may have been derived from the great ships used by the Funan people in their conquests of the kingdoms bordering the Gulf of Siam 2,000 years ago. The small carving is thought to be a figure from a shadow play, taken from the *Ramayana*, a great treasury of Indian legend—perhaps a god who commands the sea spirits and abates the fury of storms. Many fishing boats are now fitted with outboard motors

A Trengganu fisherman sits on a platform raised on stilts high above the sands, and watches the fish drying in the sun. Fish treated in this way can be stored for long periods without deterioration

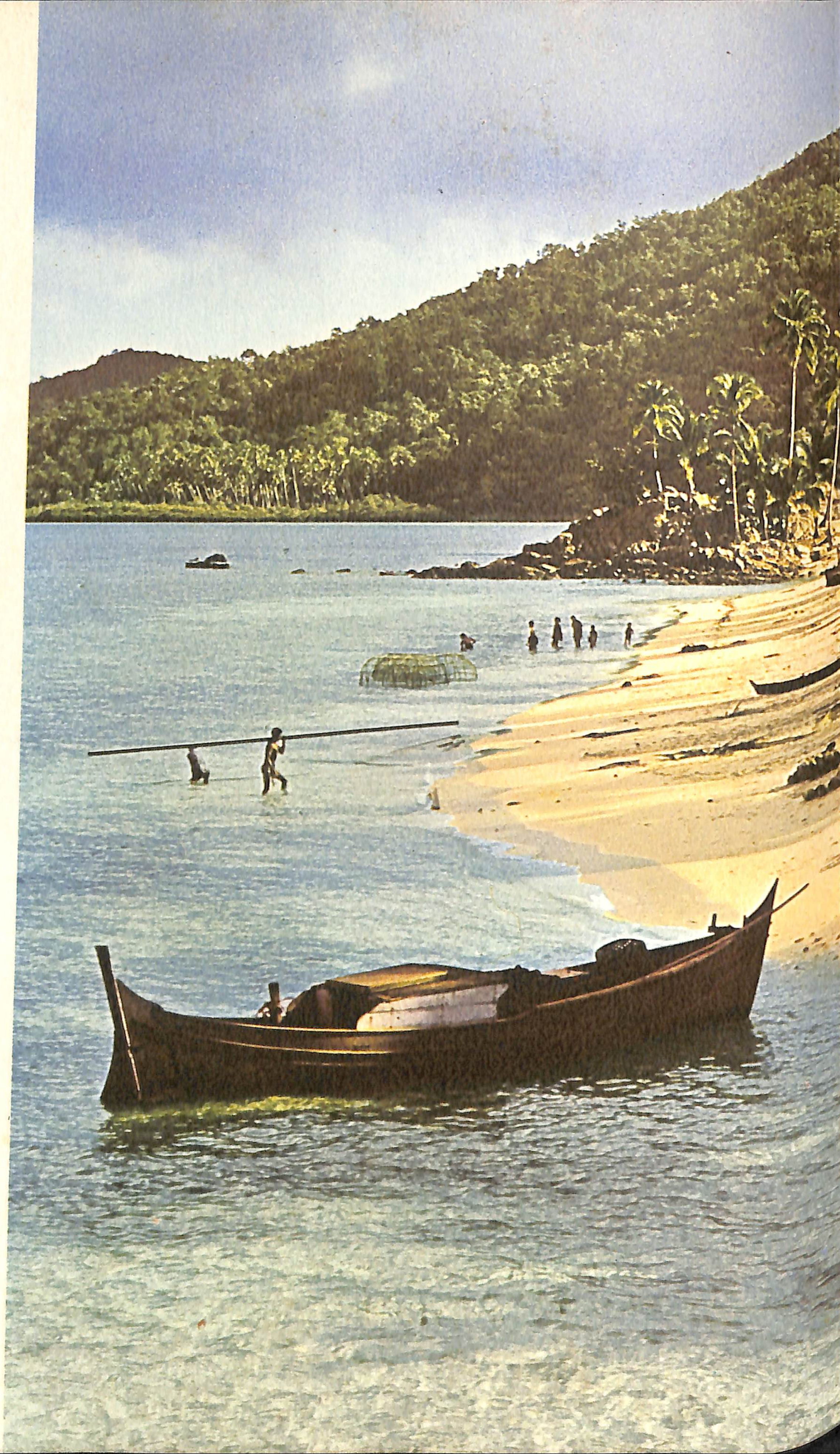




Of the many crafts of Trengganu, the making of mats and baskets from pandanus grass is most widely practised. Bright-coloured dyes are applied before plaiting. Women work beneath the coconut palms in sight of the sea with their children playing about them

THE SOUL OF MALAYA

Pulau Pinang, with the slopes of Redang in the background, has been called in Malay legend 'the island of your dreams'. There is a quality of light, a radiance, which bathes the spirit just as the coral waters refresh the swimmer's skin. But walking can be treacherous, for the coral is razor-sharp, and a coral wound may take weeks to heal. There is no grass on the island; the islanders' goats make do with coconut husks. The hunters of the birds' nests from which the famous soup is made set out from Pulau Pinang to the neighbouring islands to remove the swifts' nests high in the cliff face, while sharks cruise in the sea below





EAST COAST CUSTOMS

A Malay wedding owes much to Brahmanical ritual. The bride and groom are treated as a queen and king for a day. As their guests pass in procession, the royal ones remain impassive, without emotion. This marriage was at Rembau, on the east coast of Malaya. The bride and groom belong to the Menangkabau, a matriarchal people



Young Buddhist monks, members of the small Siamese population in northern Malaya, gaze through a grille at the bustle of life in the world outside. They usually become novices at about the age of sixteen

The Temple of the Future Buddha at Pasir Mas in Kelantan. The terraced roofs have naga serpent finials, and are coloured green and saffron. Chinese dragons wreathe the temple's pillars, fabulous monsters stand guard, and tigers have a place of honour in the courtyard



Silat, the Malay art of self-defence, is a performance so skilful that in some parts of the east coast there are experts who can throw an adversary off balance without contact but by gesture alone. Exponents of *silat* are found in most villages, and techniques and styles vary from one place to another. *Silat* is performed to the rhythm of drums and wind instruments

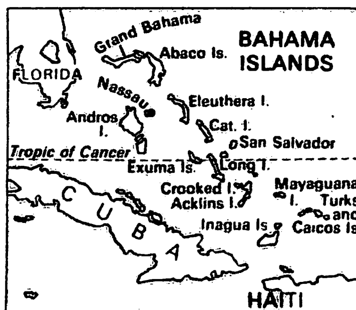


A blind musician of Kelantan controls the spirits of the earth with his ancient *rebab,* a three-stringed instrument which came originally from Arabia

BEN LUCIEN BURMAN

The mysterious Bahamas

The Bahamas are among the gems of the West Indies, with safe anchorages for yachtsmen and firm beaches of coral sand for swimmers. But behind the welcoming tourist façade lie traces of a more primitive world, where Negroes still live in huts like those of their African ancestors, and voodoo is a living force



THE LITTLE aircraft glided smoothly away from Nassau towards the cloudless horizon. Below us the sea was a mixture of incredible colours—green, blue, yellow, purple. We were flying over the waters of the Great Bahama Bank.

'You're going to see an unknown world at your doorstep,' said my tall, sandy-moustached friend Alan.

A tiny island appeared ahead, and the plane prepared to come down on the glassy sea.

'It's an astonishing world, with immense stretches of wilderness that few outsiders have ever penetrated,' Alan went on. 'It has white men with strange speech and customs, and black men living in thatched huts like those in the Congo.'

Our little plane landed on the water and taxied towards the shore. The pilot let down a pair of wheels and the plane lurched up the bank. We disembarked and walked down a narrow, stone-flagged lane between two rows of neat, tight-packed cottages. Barefoot fishermen ambled along, laden with their nets; women were filling buckets at public taps. At a little dock a sailing ship swayed gently with the tide.

'This is Green Turtle Cay,' said the pilot. 'These people were originally Loyalists who came here from the United States at the time of the Revolution. They've been cut off from the world ever since. You're probably seeing what an American fishing village was like 150 years ago.'

He spoke to a lanky figure standing near by. The islander answered and I listened in amazement. His speech was a weird mixture of cockney and of southern-states American mountaineer. I soon learnt the reason. Many of these villagers had come from the Carolinas, and their accents had become intermingled with the language of the cockney crews of the sailing ships that came over from Britain. They had other similarities to the southern mountaineers: kindliness coupled with clannishness, deep devotion to religion.

We stopped at the beach where two fishermen were weaving a long turtle net. Beside them was a tall, bony individual with a rifle and two sorry-looking hounds, who might have stepped out of a mountain cabin.

'Them's boar dogs,' he explained. 'I'm going hunting. In them there woods over



yonder.' He pointed across a wide channel to the great island of Abaco, where a dark forest came down to the water's edge.

'There's thousands of boars in them woods,' declared one of the net-makers. 'And they got tusks big as elephants. Funny thing, they ain't real boars. They was regular hogs come off a wrecked cattle ship a hundred years ago.'

'There's a herd of wild horses, too,' said the second net-maker. 'And there's wild dogs that was hunting dogs like these here once and got lost—and even wild chickens that's learned to fly again.'

We saw the forest closely from our plane soon after—a sombre green jungle stretching to the horizon. Then another crescent of white cottages showed along

The 700 islands and 2,000 rocks and cays of the Bahamas are the exposed summits of a 900-mile-long submarine cliff which stretches almost from Florida to Haiti. Paradise Beach on Hog Island, with its stretch of white coral sand, is one of the most famous beaches in the Bahamas

the shore. We landed again. 'This little place is called Hope Town,' said Alan. 'The great business here was wrecking.'

We chatted with a trio of fishermen building a sailing boat on the shiny beach. The eldest, with a salt-dried face and bright blue eyes, pointed at the lighthouse offshore.

'Used to be plenty of wrecks here before that light went up,' he said. 'And there's people living here—I ain't saying the names—whose fathers hung a lantern in the wrong place to make a ship go aground, and then stripped her bare, like a shark does a dead whale.'

A dwarfish, gnome-like man plying a saw nodded. 'When the government said they was going to put up that light, people in Hope Town went kind of crazy. Wasn't nothing they didn't do to try and stop 'em. They wouldn't sell the fellows working on her anything to eat, and they bored holes in the bottoms of the boats carrying the bricks and lime.'

'Even after the light was put up there's been plenty of boats wrecked,' remarked a jovial fellow. 'There was a preacher here was preaching his sermon, and he looked out of the church window and seen a big ship going on the rocks. "We'll now have ten minutes of silent prayer," he says. And when the people was all bowed over praying, he ran out of the church and into his boat and was first on the wreck. The people was so mad they put the pulpit at the other end of the church so he couldn't watch the ocean any more.'

We flew on in the morning. Before long an island appeared in the distance, shaped like a gigantic human foot.

'It's Andros, the largest of the Bahamas,' Alan announced. 'It's a dense jungle full of mystery, with ghosts, and mermaids in the ocean pools, and strange creatures called chickcharnies, half bird, half man, who live up in the trees. There are still many places where few human beings, white or black, have set foot.'

We landed at a rough airstrip and were met by the manager of a large tomato farm. We drove off in his car towards a shadowy forest. Suddenly he brought the car to a stop. Beside the trail, hidden by a thin wall of brush, was a hole big enough to bury a house. 'A pothole,' he explained. 'I almost drove into it yesterday.'

In every direction the earth was pitted with these strange holes, made by water dissolving the limestone core of the island. The natives used the situation for their profit. The bottoms of the holes, in contrast with the island's rocky surface, were covered with fertile soil washed there by rain. In a large hole they planted a garden; in a small hole they might grow a single banana tree.

We drove on. Black men and women passed us, carrying heavy loads on their heads as I had seen them do in Africa. We came to three tall pine trees with their tops interlaced oddly. 'Chickcharney trees,' declared the farm boss. 'Up there where the branches come together is where natives say the chickcharnies build their nests.'

Near the settlement of Mastic Point a white-haired Negro woman sat rocking on her porch. 'Tell my friend about the chickcharnies, Abbie,' said the farm boss.

'They're bigger than buzzards,' the old woman asserted, 'with red faces and red feet. You can tell if it's a chickcharney, right away, 'cause they don't cast no shadow. If you're nice to 'em they can be mighty good to you. If you're not they can be your death.

'Last year the smoke from the scrap wood the lumber people was burning was bothering the chickcharnies mighty bad. They asked the mill people to stop, but nobody wouldn't pay no attention. So one night the chickcharnies broke every window in the mill and stole every dog they had.'

We moved down the Andros coast. Everywhere I heard of supernatural practices, of Haitian voodoo doctors who came over in boats to celebrate black masses, and local hoodoo experts who could 'fix' a field to protect it from thieves. I talked of these strange ways with a misty-eyed Negro, bent with age.

'There was a man used to be here in Coakley Town named Uncle Gabe,' he said, 'and long as he was alive people didn't need any fixing. 'Cause Uncle Gabe'd rent you a ghost. You give him five dollars and he'd go out to the graveyard and get you a ghost, and you'd put it in your field and nobody bothered your peppers or sapodillas any more. A couple of times, people went from Coakley Town to the States and wanted ghosts. And they sent a letter with the five dollars to Gabe. And he rented the ghosts to 'em by mail.'

We flew across the long chain of islands known as the Exumas–strung like green beads on a jeweller's tray of gorgeous colours–and came down at the broad harbour of George Town. It needed only a glance to know that the men moving about the boats anchored there were wonderful sailors.

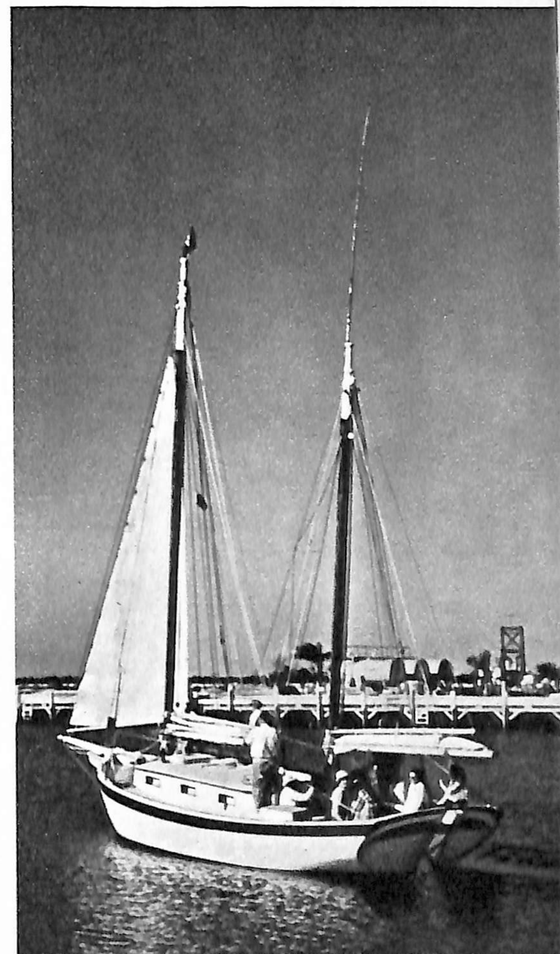
'You can take them blindfold in any direction for fifty miles,' said Alan, 'and when the blindfolds are removed they can tell you exactly where they are, even by moonlight. They do it by the colour of the bottom and the sea life there, and if they're near shore, by the smell of the different seaweed.'

Not far from George Town is the secluded harbour where the pirate Captain Kidd is said to have once moored his ships, and the salt beacon, still standing, to show where sailing vessels could find the salt they needed on their long voyages. I heard much talk of buried treasure in the islands, for the hundreds of minute cays and inlets made the region a pirate's paradise. Occasionally a camper on a remote beach would actually find a few doubloons or mouldy pieces of eight.

We continued south-eastward past Long Island and Crooked Island and Acklins, with the Ragged Islands in the distance. We landed at Mayaguana, and at first glance I thought I had returned to Africa. Thatched huts were scattered under towering coconut palms. Before the doorways black women were pounding corn in mortars made of tree trunks.

We took off again for San Salvador where, most historians say, Columbus first sighted the New World. We climbed into a jeep and travelled along a highway. The road became a broken trail winding through a tangle of brush until the jeep could go no farther. We disembarked and walked up a steep slope covered with thorns and palmetto. We reached a clearing at the top and looked out over the ocean spread below us, its thundering swells breaking over the reefs. We stood in silence, with the sea-gulls crying mournfully over our heads, while we tried to recreate the scene that had been enacted here almost 500 years ago. This was the spot, most authorities agree, which Columbus first sighted after his voyage into the unknown. Because of the reefs, however, he came ashore round a near-by point of the island.

We boarded the plane and began our final flight homeward. Nassau drifted into view. My voyage into the mysterious heart of the Bahamas was over.



Dozens of harbours and anchorages, like the one at Treasure Cay Inn on the island of Abaco, offer shelter to the many yachtsmen who sail and cruise round the Bahamas. In the past they have offered a haven to the lawless–seventeenth-century buccaneers, American Civil War blockade runners and rum-smugglers during the days of Prohibition



GEORGE WOODCOCK

Taxi to the Khyber Pass

The Khyber Pass, linking Kabul with Peshawar, was for centuries a trade and invasion route to India from Central Asia. Now the pass is crossed by a modern road, a caravan trail and a railway—although the coming of modernity has not lessened the tribesmen's fierceness, or their hospitality

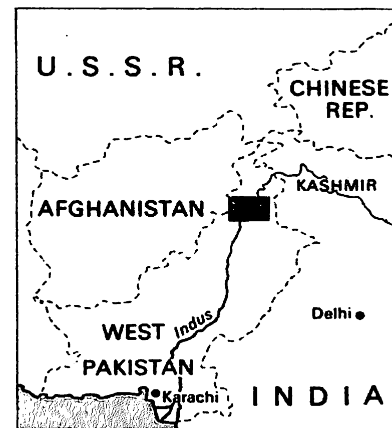
THE MORNING was just breaking in Rawalpindi and the high notes of bugles sounded distantly from the cantonment when Yussuf, our driver, called my wife Inge and me for our journey to Peshawar and the Khyber Pass. Along the Great Trunk Road the countryside was already awake as the sun flushed up over the eastern hills and set the sharp edges of the mountains glowing. Cyclists in old army raincoats, their mouths covered with tartan scarves to keep out the noxious morning air, came riding in straggling companies from the outlying villages. Double-decker buses, superannuated from the streets of English towns, trundled past the barracks.

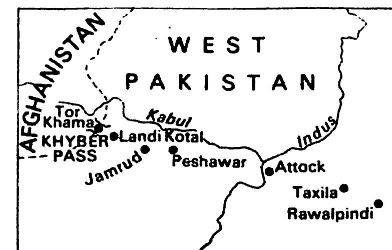
Trousered hill-women walked by the roadside, carrying on their heads long, swaying bundles of cane. And ox-wagons, loaded high and wide with straw, were goaded slowly forward by men so voluminously wrapped in brown blankets that only their eyes could be seen. Time and again they blocked the road, and Yussuf muttered angrily to himself.

As the sun rose higher, the brooks and ponds steamed like hot springs under its rays, the apricot haze lifted from the snow peaks to the north, and the white farms glistened like teeth on the distant hillsides. We passed the ruins of Taxila, and more mysterious mounds which stand isolated, waiting for the day when archaeologists will begin a thorough survey of the classic invasion route into India and at last unravel the mysteries of Alexander the Great's cities beyond the Hindu Kush.

And then for many miles we drove over sun-brown melancholy uplands with grey villages desolate under the high clear sky. Each village had its cemetery among the winter-bare fields, with jagged slabs of rock at the heads of the rough mounds of earth, and on isolated hillocks coloured flags hung limply over the tombs of the *pirs,* the Sufi saints whom the Moslems of the hills worship as their ancestors worshipped the spirits of the earth.

Two hours after leaving Rawalpindi we entered a range of small hills of blackish rock, still shining with the morning dampness. In the folds of these hills stood





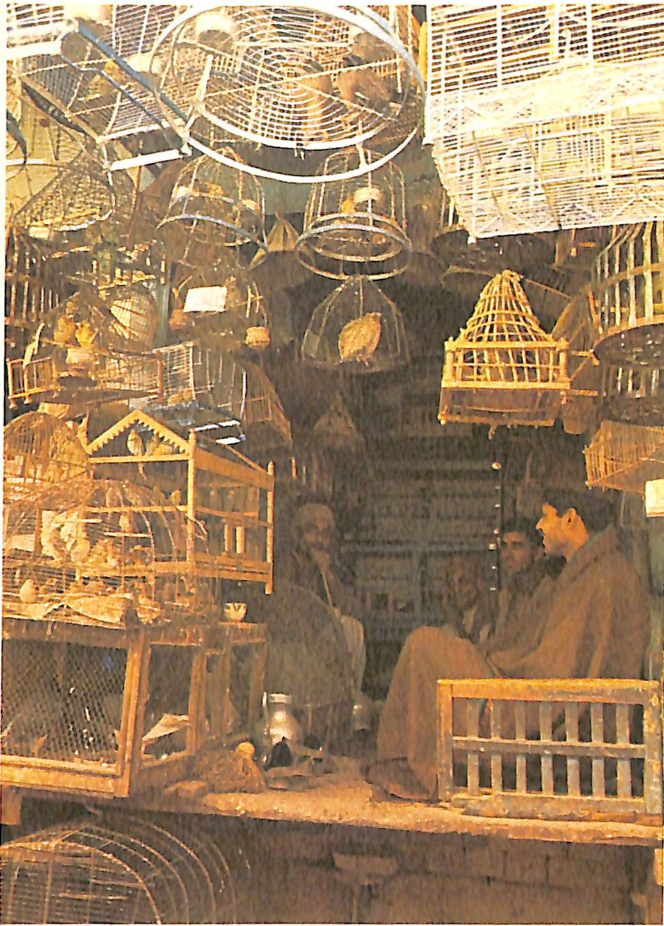
The external boundries of India as shown in the map are neither correct nor authentic.

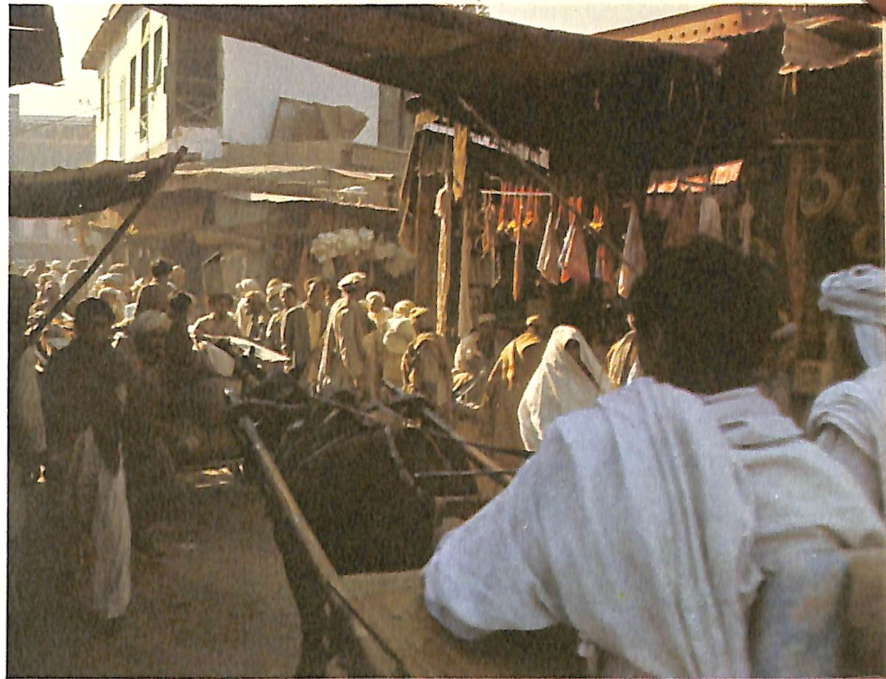
A view from the highest point of the Khyber Pass, Landi Kotal, down the road and the camel caravan track. The mountains in the background are part of the Hindu Kush range, a continuation of the Himalayas

The ruins of Taxila, famous 2,000 years ago as a seat of learning, and now a major centre of archaeology. The town was captured by Alexander the Great, became prosperous under the empire of Asoka and was eventually sacked by the Huns. Among the ruins are Buddhist stupas—domed funeral mounds which held relics



The junction of the rivers Kabul and Indus on the road between Taxila and Peshawar. The rivers provide irrigation for the fertile plains surrounding Peshawar, major city of the North-west Frontier region. Peshawar, ten miles east of the Khyber Pass, has growing industries and a modern university. It is West Pakistan's centre for trade with Afghanistan





The people of the east enjoy haggling, and the citizens of Peshawar are no exception. In the birdcage market *left* a shopkeeper discusses a sale with customers. In the general market *above* farmers inch a horse and cart through a crowded street

Day's end at a nomad camp near Peshawar. The camels are tethered, the tents closed against the cool evening air. Turbaned Pathans, reflected in the still river, hurry to finish off their work before darkness



ancient Moslem tombs with moss-mottled fluted domes. We passed through the town of Attock where occupants of the tombs had once lived, and crossed the Gorge of the Indus by the suspension bridge; khaki-clad police stood on guard there, armed with carbines and bayonets. There have been guards for many centuries on the Indus crossing at Attock, which lies on the route of most of the great land invasions of India.

Alexander crossed the great river there by a bridge of boats, and Tamerlane followed him several centuries later on his way to the sacking of Delhi. Since his own ancestor Babur had also travelled this way to the conquest of Hindustan, the Great Moghul Akbar realized the strategic importance of the Gorge, and it was he who in 1581 founded the town of Attock and built its great fort.

Still Akbar's fort stood, a structure of high crenellated walls with hooded arrow slits, spreading in rigid slabs of masonry down the curved smooth rock of the hillsides that sloped to the edge of the Gorge. Yussuf swept his arm appreciatively towards the uncrumbling bastions. 'Pathan never capture Akbar's fort.' It was meant as a tribute. As a man of the hills, Yussuf had no doubt that the Pathans were the best of all warriors and that the most important wars were still those fought by tribal marksmen in the mountain terrain of the Hindu Kush.

At Attock the Indus was already a wide, powerful river, which had run hundreds of miles through Kashmir, Gilgit and Swat from its source in the uplands of western Tibet, and it rushed darkly, with deep perilous-looking eddies, between the rocks that formed beaches under the high black cliffs. Through this treacherous passage a Greek captain named Skylax sailed on an expedition in the employ of the Greek King Darius two centuries before Alexander came to India. He was the first European to explore the Indian sub-continent, but part of a sentence in the *History* of Herodotus is his only monument.

Beyond Attock, our way to Peshawar lay along the Kabul River, which joins the Indus a little way above the Gorge—a broad river, flowing slowly between willow groves and small terraced fields, and opening to the Peshawar Valley, a wide oasis rimmed by the austere grey slopes of the Suleiman Mountains. Here the copses were turning yellow and the apple and pear trees in the big orchards had shed their leaves; but the fruit hung ripe and brilliant among the dark evergreen foliage of the tangerine groves.

At last the skyline of Peshawar came into sight, the silhouette of a Central Asian city outlined against the mountains, with minarets pointing upward like stone fingers over the squat domes and broken rectangles of flat roofs. We passed through the smoky suburbs of mud houses and, skirting the bazaars, entered the green avenues of the cantonment.

Our destination in Peshawar was the city museum, with its celebrated collection of Gandhara sculptures gathered from the monasteries in the surrounding hills. We stepped into a bleak Gothic hall where old bearded men in white turbans huddled over charcoal braziers among the grey Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, standing stiff in hieratic postures. As we walked past these long lines of Greek-faced statues, a young albino attached himself to us, squinting painfully through his long pale lashes. He spoke a little English and led us into the office where the

A party of nomads straggles up the caravan track of the Khyber Pass with heavily laden pack camels. Most Pathan farmers are settled; others, like these, are migratory herdsmen and caravaneers



curator sat huddled in an overcoat, with a heavy Kashmir shawl over his shoulders, examining with a magnifying glass a tray of gold and silver coins.

The curator welcomed us with the surprised, happy smile of a man relieved from winter boredom; visitors interested in his treasures did not come often in the cold season. He clapped his hands, and almost immediately one of the old bearded men came in with a tray on which stood three fragile bowls of translucent porcelain. It was green tea, perfumed with spices, the customary drink offered by the Pathans, who, for all their ferocious reputation, are fervently anti-alcoholic.

Afterwards, the curator walked around the galleries with us, explaining where the exhibits had been found, and how some of them had been rescued from the iconoclastic fervour of the Afridi tribesmen. Beside the Gandhara Buddhas, there were gauche wooden horses, carved by the Kafirs, those enigmatic fair-skinned



Travellers trudge along the dusty road from Taxila to Peshawar. All their possessions go with them—cows and their calves, donkeys laden with tents and blankets, the family dog. The women carry on their heads baskets holding cooking utensils and food. Though many Pathans claim Jewish origin, they are probably of Turco-Iranian stock

people from the Hindu Kush who still celebrate at each grape harvest a rite resembling the Bacchic festivals of ancient Greece. The place of honour in the centre of the museum was occupied by a crude little bronze box, crowned with stubby figures of the Buddha and his disciples, which provided one of the most fascinating clues to the links between East and West in the classical age. It was the reliquary, meant to hold a fragment of the Buddha's bones, which the Greek architect Agesilas made with his own hands and placed in the great pagoda he designed for King Kanishka at Peshawar in the second century AD. Kanishka's pagoda was an enormous structure of stone terraces and wooden roofs 700 feet high, the tallest building in ancient Asia. The pilgrims came from as far as China to admire its magnificence and listen to the music of its thousands of bronze wind bells.

We left the museum and went to the local tourist officer to get the necessary permit to enter a restricted tribal area. Then we set off for the Khyber Pass, driving out past the green lawns of the university campus towards the Suleiman Mountains. The point where the dry shaly foothills of the range began to rise from the plain was marked by the turreted fort of Jamrud, shaped like a ship of stone; it was built by Ranjit Singh, the Sikh King of Lahore, to keep the mountain Pathans out of Peshawar. Outside the fort the barrier was down across the road; the sentry motioned us to leave the car, and we went into a roadside shack where a sharp-nosed, blue-eyed policeman sat over an immense leather-bound register, whose replicas we had seen in remote police posts on other distant frontiers, in the Andorran Pyrenees, in the Indian Himalayas, in the Peruvian Andes. He took our permits, scribbled in his book, exacted two rupees, handed me a grubby scrap of paper with some incomprehensible pencil marks upon it, and said curtly: 'Back by five. Not after.'

The Pakistani authorities do not guarantee a stranger's safety in the pass overnight unless he has some arrangement with a leading local tribesman who is willing to give protection, which according to the Pathan code of honour implies an obligation to avenge any injury to the visitor.

The old Ford ground painfully up through stony lower valleys and in among dry, rubbly ranges, yet there was never anything very daunting about the journey. For the whole twenty-three miles from Jamrud to Tor Khama on the Afghan border, the road wound over gradients that must have been as easy for camel caravans or marching men as they would have been for a better car than Yussuf's antiquated taxi, the relic, as he now boasted to excuse its slowness, of some departed American consul. The arid crumbling mountains crowded at times oppressively close to the road. They never rose to any great height, but there was hardly a hundred yards of the highway that was not commanded by some crag or bouldered hillside from which Pathan tribesmen could have fired on troops or terrorized passing caravans.

The British cleared and fortified the heights, one after another, until the pass became one of the most heavily defended areas in the world. Every spur of rock supported at least a turret of rusty stone, clinging like a swallow's nest to the cliffside, with the loopholes and windows protected by heavy sheets of iron. Every bridge had its pillbox, and every signal-box on the narrow-gauge railway that climbed to within three miles of the Afghan border was a miniature fort.

These defences were built for two purposes, to prevent invasion from the far side of the Suleiman range, and to protect the Pass itself from the Pathan tribes, particularly the Afridis who inhabit the nearby valleys. Nobody has completely subdued the frontier tribes since Alexander gave them a drubbing 2,300 years ago, which earned him such a lasting respect that even today the Afridis claim to be descended from the soldiers of Two-horned Iskander. The British bombed and bribed the Pathans, but never brought them completely under control. Nowadays the Pakistani Government has concluded an uneasy truce; the Pathans refrain from making raids outside their valleys, but at the borders of their territory the law of Pakistan ends and the law of the tribes begins: vendettas continue unrestrained unless they are compounded by blood money; hospitality is a sacred duty; the *jirga*, the assembly of adult males, governs the affairs of the village; and

the land is redivided every few years to give each tribesman his chance of cultivating fertile fields.

At the same time, enjoying both ways of life, the Afridis in particular have entered the Pakistani business world as middlemen and carriers.

The crowded buses of the Afridi Transport careered past us up the road, screaming to a halt whenever a group of baggy-trousered, rifle-bearing Pathans stood waiting, and then dashing off at breakneck speed while the last man was still hanging on precariously. They were all bound for the bazaar at Landi Kotal, the summit of the pass, and at last Yussuf's car boiled up the hill behind them and subsided to a halt in the cloud of dust that hung over the parking area. As we got out, Yussuf asked me to advance him a hundred rupees. 'I want to buy some things,' he said, when I looked at him doubtfully. Rather reluctantly, I gave him what was the major part of the day's fare.

The bazaar lay in a hollow beneath us, a jungle of irregular tiled roofs over which the thin minarets of the mosque pointed their loudspeakers in all the cardinal directions. We clambered down broken steps into a labyrinth of narrow arcaded alleys, protected by drooping and ragged canvas awnings, between which the sun fell in solid-looking mote-laden masses. The flies buzzed and danced around our heads, and the air irritated our eyes with a combination of woodsmoke, curry and sizzling mutton fat coming from the open eating-houses where delectable-looking patties were being fried in open pans a yard across and eaten by customers sitting in rows on string beds. The customers were all men. In fact, there was not a woman to be seen in the whole bazaar.

Down the alleys the tall Afridis strolled with the erect, deliberate bearing which they carefully cultivate, rifles hanging from their shoulders and Afghan daggers thrust into belts around the long, blue, shirt-like garments which they wear over their full pantaloons. Their great aquiline noses and their pale eyes glittering out of weather-darkened faces gave them a stern and predatory expression, but when they smiled most of them had, like Yussuf, a look of incongruous gentleness; some wore a peculiarly frivolous headgear of a gilded basket decorated with a twisted blue silk scarf. The older men, the fierce-eyed *maliks* with their clipped beards, ignored us both. The younger men would sometimes smile at me, and a few of them said 'Hullo!' but even they treated Inge's embarrassing presence by acting as if she did not exist. This suited her purpose, since all the time she was taking surreptitious photographs.

It was soon obvious why Yussuf had asked me for a hundred rupees. Landi Kotal owes its very existence as a bazaar on this bleak mountain ridge to the smugglers who operate over the mountains from Kabul, and who are tolerated by the Pakistani authorities as part of the price to be paid for Pathan goodwill. I doubt if there was a single merchant there who did not deal in contraband; they all looked so sleek and well-fed among their transistor radios, Luger pistols, Swiss watches and German cameras. They were even selling portable television sets, in a country which has no television network, and I am sure that on order they could have provided one with a cut-rate computer. Every now and again we would see Yussuf seated on the platform of a different stall, drinking green tea with the fat, bearded merchant and conversing with the ceremonious procrastination which is thought proper for business dealings among the Pathans. When I asked Yussuf if

he had bought anything in the bazaar, he shook his head, but later on he seemed very relieved when we got through the police post at Peshawar without the car being inspected.

On the way down to the border at Tor Khama we passed one of the strange Pathan villages which remind one of San Gemignano, the Italian city of hostile towers, since each of them consists of a series of small forts. Each of the forts is inhabited by a single joint family; it has mud walls, twelve to fifteen feet high, three or four loopholed firing-towers, and a single massive wooden gate which is the only means of entry. The Pathan's home is literally his castle, and I have heard of villages where the dwellers in these fortified houses had to dig trenches in order to reach the neutral territory of the highroad without being shot up by their neighbours. On this occasion Inge asked Yussuf to stop the car so that she might photograph the village. He refused, with alarm in his voice. 'No! Not now! Pathan see you . . . he go *zing*!' He aimed his finger like a bullet at his brow, and, since we assumed that he knew the inclinations of his own people, we compromised by taking a snapshot through the window.

The predilection for going *zing* is so accepted among the Pathans that every party of Afridis we passed on our way from Landi Kotal to the Afghan border, with its train of pack ponies or mules, had at least one rifleman walking at the head of the caravan and keeping a wary eye on the heights around. Almost every family has in its past some deed of blood for which another family may any day decide to take revenge.

On the frontier at Tor Khama we sat on a high terrace overlooking the border post, and ate our dry hotel sandwiches. It was a small oasis, with the shadow of trees and with flowering shrubs which looked wonderfully fresh and bright after the dreariness of the shaly mountain-sides. A few yards down the road from the Pakistan barrier stood a red-and-green sentry-box, and a single guard representing Afghanistan; he wore a rough grey uniform with a Russian cut, which contrasted with the distinctly British style of the Pakistani uniforms. All we could see of his country was a valley running down between the same kind of hills as we had already traversed and a grove of poplars surrounding a yellow-stuccoed building a few hundred yards along the road. It was, doubtless with intent, the most slackly held frontier I have ever seen. The Afghan and Pakistani guards kept an ostentatious watch over the road itself, but along the dry river bed beside it, towards which their backs were resolutely turned, we watched a train of twenty loaded ponies entering Afghanistan unchallenged, and a group of three heavily armed men bringing their pack mules into Pakistan.

As we were leaving we passed a trio of western-dressed Pathans sitting over a blackened iron bowl which contained some kind of curried mutton in a deep brown sauce. They were eating the rich-looking mess with their fingers; the eldest of them stood up and invited us to share their meal. I was delighted to discover that the famous Pathan hospitality was not a mere matter of legend, and tempted to try their food, hot and unhygienic as it looked, but Yussuf was signalling in the background that it was time to leave, time to get out of the pass before darkness fell and guns began to go *zing*. So, after a moment of conversation, we left. As we drove into Peshawar, night was settling over the wide valley of Gandhara, and the last sunlight faded over the Suleiman Mountains towards Kabul.



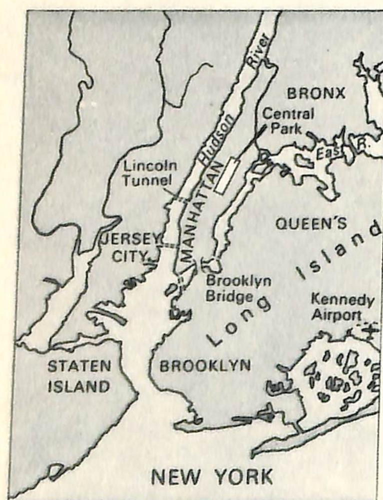
A Khyber tribesman. Pathans are warriors as well as farmers, and in the market at Landi Kotal *below*, highest point of the Khyber Pass, the old men walk straight-backed, proud and aloof to strangers. Violence erupts easily among the Afridi tribesmen when a point of honour is at stake. Pathans abide by a code with three obligations: to give shelter to any fugitive, to offer open-handed hospitality, and to wipe out dishonour by revenge. Disputes over women, property, or personal injury can lead to blood feuds among families or even whole clans. Pathan travellers in the Khyber area keep a rifle at the ready and a wary eye on the rocks above. Pathans are fine fighters in their own territory and have been a thorn in the side of many rulers of India—including the British. During the first Afghan war the Khyber Pass was the scene of dozens of clashes and some disasters involving Queen Victoria's troops. But the hill people are more than skilled skirmishers: they love music, dancing, poetry and heroic tales. Including the Afridis, there are about 9 million Pathans in the Khyber area, divided among sixty tribes

JAMES MORRIS

The marvel of New York

Broadway, Fifth Avenue, the Empire State Building–New York's most famous streets and buildings are household names throughout the world. This great city, the symbol of hope to millions of immigrants down the years, has an exuberance expressed in the soaring bulk of its skyscrapers, the colour in its streets, and the restless go-getting of its inhabitants





AT ONE TIME or another I have approached some splendid places, most of them distinct with mystery or age: Venice on a misty spring morning, silent and shrouded, like a surrendered knight-at-arms; Moscow, its fortress barbarically gleaming; Everest, the watch-tower, on the theatrical frontiers of Nepal and Tibet; or Kerak of the Crusaders, high and solitary in the mountains of Moab. All are celebrated in history or romance; but none lingers so tenaciously in my memory as the approach to the City of New York, the noblest of the American symbols.

The approach from the sea is marvellous enough, but has become hackneyed from film and postcard. It is the road from inland that is exciting now, when Manhattan appears suddenly, a last outpost on the edge of the continent, and the charged atmosphere of the place spreads around it like ripples, and you enter it as you would plunge into a mountain stream in August. A splendid highway leads you there. It sweeps across the countryside masterfully, two white ribbons of concrete, aloof from the little villages and farms that lie outside its impetus, and along it the vehicles move in an endless, unbroken, unswerving stream. They carry the savour of distant places: cars from Georgia, with blossoms wilting in the back seat, or diesel trucks bringing steel pipes from Indiana; big black Cadillacs from Washington, and sometimes a gaudy convertible (like a distant hint of jazz) from New Orleans or California.

Through the pleasant country they pass, the traffic thickening as the big city draws nearer, and into the grimy industrial regions on its periphery; past oil refineries spouting smoke and flame, ships in dock and aircraft on the tarmac, railway lines and incinerators and dismal urban marshes; until suddenly in the distance there stand the skyscrapers, shimmering in the sun.

A little drunk from the sight, you drive breathlessly into the great tunnel beneath the Hudson River, turning on as you do so the radio on your dashboard; the Lincoln Tunnel has its own radio station for the benefit of cars passing through it, and it seems churlish not to use it. You must not drive faster than thirty-five miles an hour in the tunnel, nor slower than thirty, and there is a policeman half way

The twenty-two square miles of Manhattan have a rock base on which the skyscrapers can soar up as far as technology will allow. Buildings from the turn of the century are vanishing before the advancing tide of glass and steel





A Hasidic Jew—a member of the strictest sect of Judaism—in the costume traditional since the eighteenth century. The New York Jewish population is now about 2 million. The 'Jewish East Side' lies at the south-east corner of Manhattan



A New York cop in watchful stance

along in a little glass cabin, so that you progress like something on an assembly line, soullessly; but when you emerge into the daylight, then a miracle occurs, a sort of daily renaissance, a flowering of the spirit. The cars and trucks and buses, no longer confined in channels, suddenly spring away in all directions with a burst of engines and a black cloud of exhausts. At once, instead of discipline, there is a profusion of enterprise. There are policemen shouting and gesticulating irritably; men pushing racks of summer frocks; trains rumbling along railway lines; great liners blowing their sirens; dowdy dark-haired women with shopping-bags, and men hurling imprecations out of taxi windows; shops with improbable Polish names, and huge racks of strange newspapers; bold colours and noises and indefinable smells; skinny cats and very old dustcarts; bus drivers with patient, weary faces. Almost before you know it, the *mystique* of Manhattan is all around you.

There is a richness to the life of this extraordinary island that springs only partly from its immeasurable wealth. A lavish fusion of races contributes to it, and a spirit of hope and open-heartedness that has survived from the days of free immigration. The Statue of Liberty, graphically described in one reference book as 'a substantial figure of a lady', is dwarfed by the magnificence of the skyline, and from the deck of a ship it is easy to miss it. But in New York, more than anywhere else in America, there is still dignity to the lines carved upon its plinth, and reproduced sixty years later at Kennedy Airport:

> Give me your tired, your poor,
> Your huddled masses yearning to breathe free,
> The wretched refuse of your teeming shore.

Here in the space of a few square miles all the races mingle, and the extremes of human nature clash. This is not the all-American city, but rather (as a British ambassador once remarked) a European city of no particular country; enlivened, sharpened and intensified by the American ideal.

Everyone has read of the magical glitter of this place; but until you have been there it is difficult to conceive of a city so sparkling that at any time Fred Astaire might quite reasonably come dancing his urbane way down Fifth Avenue. It is a marvellously exuberant city, even when the bitter winds of autumn howl through its canyons. The taxi-drivers talk long and fluently; not so well or so caustically as Cockney cabmen, but from a wider range of experience, for they may speak of a pogrom in old Russia, or of Ireland in its bad days, or speculate about the Naples their fathers came from. The waiters press you to eat more, you look so thin. The girl in the drug store asks pertly but very politely if she may borrow the comic section of your newspaper. On the skating rink at Rockefeller Centre there is always something pleasant to see: pretty girls showing off their pirouettes; children staggering about in helpless paroxysms; an old eccentric sailing by with a look of profoundest contempt on his face; an elderly lady in tweeds excitedly arm-in-arm with an instructor.

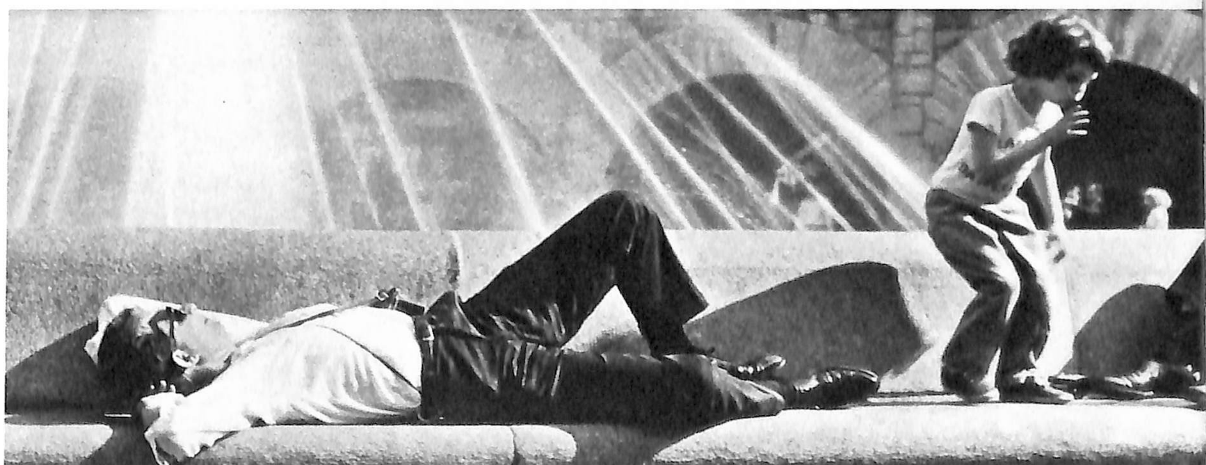
Boundless vivacity and verve are the inspiration of Manhattan. In its midtown streets (away from slums and dingy suburbs) you are in a world of spirited movement and colour. The best of the new buildings are glass eyries, gay as cream cakes. One structure on Park Avenue has a garden for its ground floor and a slab of green glass for its superstructure. A bank on Fifth Avenue has creepers growing from its

In the garment district, which makes more clothes than any other area of the same size in the world. During working hours the streets are congested by hundreds of carts laden with partly completed garments, tightly covered against dust and the prying eyes of competitors



Taking it easy on Broadway, where it crosses 72nd Street. Broadway, which runs the whole length of Manhattan, widens here, with central islands dividing the traffic. People sit here even on the hottest summer days, when the temperature rises to well over a hundred

A tourist rests by a fountain at the Boat Basin near 79th Street. New York is the 'big city' to millions of Americans; it provides museums, art galleries and concert halls, but few places for the walker to rest

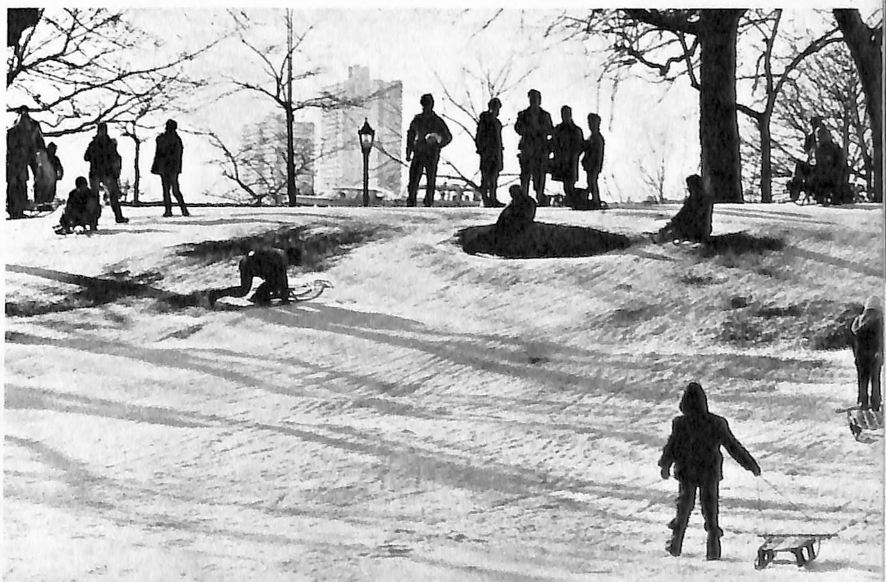



PAN AM

View to the north-east from the Empire State Building, still the highest in the world at 1,472 feet. To the right is the East River; the small island is Welfare Island, crossed by Queensboro Bridge, leading to the borough of Queens in the far distance. The enormous slab in the centre is the Panam Building, with the striped pinnacle of the Chrysler Tower to its right. Fifth Avenue is on the left

Below Scenes in the open-air lungs of New York. Central Park, over two miles long and half a mile wide, is Manhattan's largest oasis; across the boating lake loom the luxury penthouses of Fifth Avenue. New York's winter has its lighter side: children toboggan in Riverside Park, on the west side of Manhattan beside the Hudson







A street stall in the Lower East Side area. New York has many street markets where the housewife can buy national specialities—Jewish, Italian, Greek, German or Ukrainian

Puerto Ricans watching the Columbus Day Parade, held annually on October 12. They have unrestricted entry into the USA, and live mainly in Spanish Harlem

ceiling, and the passer-by, looking through its huge plate-glass windows, can see the black round door of its strong-room. Outside a nearby typewriter shop a real typewriter is mounted on a pedestal, for anyone to try. Once when I passed at two in the morning an old man with a ragged beard was typing with hectic concentration, as if he had just run down from his garret with a thrilling new formula or a message from the outer galaxies.

The traffic swirls through New York like a rather slobby mixture running through a cake-mould. There are fewer solid traffic jams than in London, but a more inexorable oozy progression of vehicles. A nineteenth-century observer described New York traffic as being 'everywhere close-spread, thick-tangled (yet no collision, no trouble) with masses of bright colour, action and tasty toilets'. The description is not so far from the mark today, and the colours especially are still bright and agreeable. The women are not afraid of colour in their clothes; the shop windows are gorgeous; the cars are painted with a peacock dazzle. From upstairs the streets of Manhattan are alive with shifting colours.

Sometimes, as you push your way through the brisk crowds ('*Pardon* me, I hope I haven't snagged your nylons') there will be a scream of sirens and a little procession of official cars will rush by, pushing the traffic out of its way, crashing the lights with complacent impunity, on its way to the Waldorf or the City Hall. The motor-cycle police, hunched on their machines, look merciless (but are probably very kind to old ladies). The reception committee, in dark coats and Homburgs, is excessively official. And there in the recesses of the grandest car can be seen the distinguished visitor, opera singer or statesman or bronzed explorer, shamefully delighted at being able to ignore the traffic rules. I once rode in such a cavalcade,

and found that the psychological effect can be disturbing. A mild little man sharing my car was soon hurling vicious abuse at the less agile of the pedestrians, and the wife of the distinguished visitor fainted.

There is a row of hansom cabs at the corner of Central Park, each with its coal heater (if it's winter), each tended by an elderly gentleman in a top hat, the horses a little thin, the wheels a little wobbly. Lovers find them convenient for bumpy dalliances in the park. If you wander down to the waterside on either side of the island you may stand in the shadow of an ocean liner, or watch a tug (with a high curved bridge, a nonchalant skipper, and an air of Yankee insolence) steaming under the black girders of Brooklyn Bridge. Outside Grand Central Station, through a grill beneath your feet, you may see the gleaming metal of a Chicago express down in the bowels; passengers on the smartest of these trains are ushered into them along deep red carpets. You could live in Grand Central Station without ever seeing a train, for they are all secreted below in carpeted dungeons.

The stores of Manhattan bulge with the good things of the earth, with a splendour that outclasses those perfumed Oriental marts of fable. 'Ask for anything you like,' says the old waiter at the Waldorf-Astoria with pardonable bombast, 'and if we haven't got it we'll send down the road for it.' Furs in the windows shine with an icy distinction. Dresses are magnificent from Paris, or pleasantly easy-going in the American manner. There are shoes for every conceivable size; books for the most esoteric taste; pictures and treasures summoned from every age and every continent; foods of exotic delight; little dogs of unlikely breed; refrigerators already stocked with edibles; haughty Rolls-Royces; toys of dizzy ingenuity; endless and enchanting fripperies; anything, indeed, that fancy can demand or money buy. It is a storehouse of legendary wonder, such as only our age could stock. What a prize it would be for some looting army of barbarians!

Yet so obvious and dramatic are the extremes of New York that you still see many beggars about its streets. They stand diffidently on the pavements, decently dressed but coatless, asking civilly for help before they leave the bright lights and go home for the night to their hopeless squalid doss-houses. They are ambassadors from another Manhattan: the countless gloomy streets where Negroes and Puerto Ricans, Poles and poor Italians live in unhappy neighbourhood, fighting their old battles and despising one another. A suggestion of ill-temper, resentment or disgruntlement often sours the taste of New York, and it is an unpleasant thing to see the current crime register in a Harlem police station. Page succeeds page in terrible succession, thronged with stabbings and rapes, robberies and assaults, acts of lunatic spite or repellent perversion. 'Well,' you say as casually as you can, a little shaken by this vast superfluity of Sunday journalism, 'well, and how many weeks of crime do these pages represent?' The police sergeant smiles tolerantly. 'That's today's register,' he says.

You can sense a little of all this horror simply by driving through the dark back streets; or walking warily across Central Park at night; or buying a drink in an East Side bar, surrounded by companions of advanced animal instincts, funnelled from the slums of half a dozen countries. Or you can feel the tensions down at the dockside, where union clashes with union, docker with docker, with a frightening fervour. The dockers, speaking many languages, shuffle here and there like automatons. There is a feeling of cold incipient brutality, and if you make a habit of







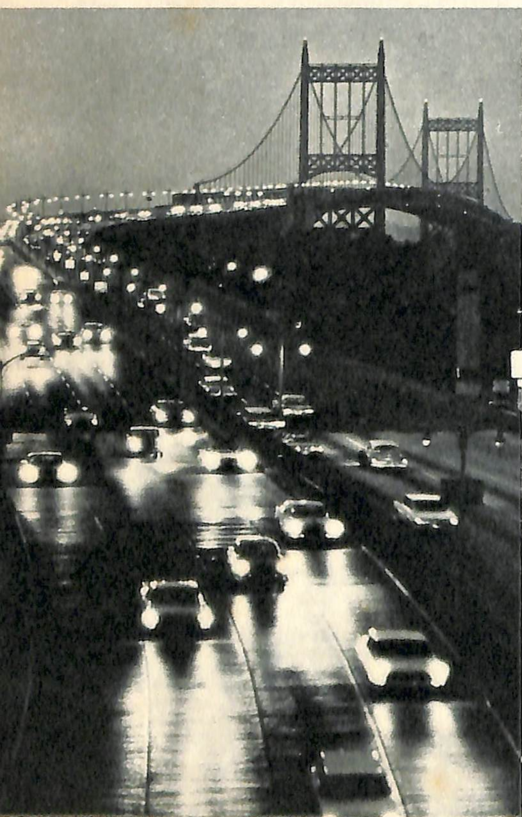
New York vignettes. *Top* A woman in Queens, across the East River from Manhattan, pulls a basket of household purchases. *Middle* Two matrons chat at the intersection of Broadway and 79th Street. *Bottom* A man gets a lunch-hour sun-tan

hanging around the docks you will never be surprised to read, as you often will, of bodies found in the water and bloody wharfside brawls.

These are the heirs to those millions of hopeful immigrants who crossed the Atlantic in the Victorian age, fleeing from despotisms or famines, looking for an Eldorado. The poor European immigrant is a dominant figure of American history, and his spirit still haunts the squares and streets of the Battery, at the tip of Manhattan, and loiters around the landing-places where the ferry leaves for Staten Island. He is the prime symbol of American liberalism, and it is a typical paradox that though politics drove him from Europe, often enough, it was material ambition that made him an American. America is the land acquisitive, and few Americans abandon the search for wealth, or lose their admiration for those who find it.

So the unassimilated New Yorkers, the millions of new Americans in the city, however poor or desolate they seem, however disappointed in their dreams, still loyally respect the American ideal: the chance for every man to achieve opulence. Sometimes the sentiment has great pathos. An old man I once met in a cheap coffee-shop near the East River boasted gently, without arrogance, of the fabulous wealth of New York, for all the world as if its coffers were his, and all its luxuries, instead of a grey bed-sitting room and a coat with frayed sleeves. He said: 'Why, the garbage thrown away in this city every morning—*every* morning—would feed the whole of Europe for a week.' He said it without envy and with a genuine pride of possession, and a number of dusty demolition men sitting near by nodded their heads in proud and wondering agreement.

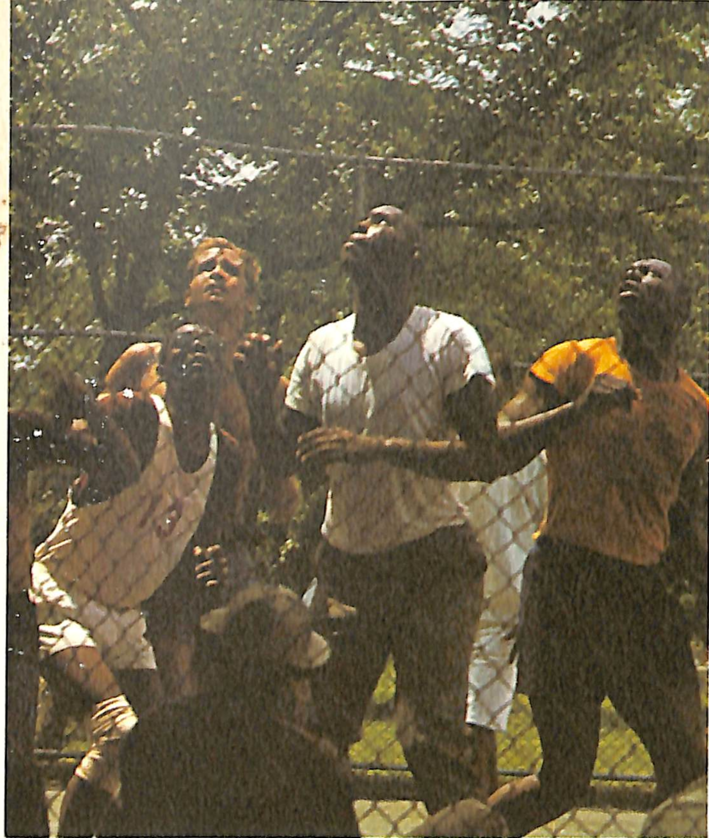
Traffic at night on the Triborough Bridge, so called because it links the boroughs of Manhattan, Queens and the Bronx at the junction of the East River and the Harlem River. Altogether Manhattan is linked to the other boroughs and to New Jersey by nine major bridges and four tunnels—which are often hard put to it to cope with the enormous flood of commuting traffic



All the same, it is sometimes difficult to keep one's social conscience in order among the discrepancies of Manhattan; the gulf between rich and poor is so particularly poignant in this capital of opportunity. There is fun and vigour and stimulation in New York's symphony of capitalism—the blazing neon lights, the huge bright office blocks, the fine stores and friendly shop assistants; and yet there is something distasteful about a pleasure-drome so firmly based upon personal advantage. Everywhere there are nagging signs that the life of the place is inspired by a self-interest not scrupulously enlightened. 'Learn to take care of others,' says a poster urging women to become nurses, 'and you will know how to take care of yourself.' 'The life you save may be your own,' says a road safety advertisement. 'Let us know if you can't keep this reservation,' you are told on the railway ticket, 'it may be required by a friend or a business associate of yours.' Faced with such constant reminders, the foreign visitor begins to doubt the altruism even of his benefactors. Is the party really to give him pleasure, or is the host to gain some obscure credit from it? The surprise present is very welcome, but what does its giver expect in return? Soon he is tempted to believe than any perversion of will or mind, any ideological wandering, any crankiness, any jingoism is preferable to so constant an obsession with the advancement of self.

But there, Manhattan is a haven for the ambitious, and you must not expect its bustling rivalries to be too saintly. Indeed, you may as well admit that the whole place is built on greed, in one degree or another; even the city churches, grotesquely Gothic or Anglican beyond belief, have their thrusting social aspirations. What is wonderful is that so much that is good and beautiful has sprung from second-rate

The beach at Coney Island, at the southern end of Brooklyn. This is the most accessible stretch of coast for millions of New Yorkers who cannot afford to go farther afield; it is an easy subway ride from Manhattan



Basketball players in Riverside Park. Harlem, where most of the city's half million Negroes live, is a vaguely defined area between the Hudson and Harlem Rivers, north of Central Park

The Staten Island Ferry leaving from the Battery Park terminal at the southern tip of Manhattan. Boats do the trip to Staten Island, on the opposite side of Upper New York Bay, in about twenty minutes. They pass the Statue of Liberty, and give an excellent view of the harbour





At the jazzy heart of New York's entertainment world *above,* cars, people and buildings jumble together in the Times Square area. *Left* Giants of different epochs: looking down Park Avenue to the Grand Central Terminal Building, built 1903-13 and now dwarfed by the shining bulk of the Panam Building behind. The taxis are brilliantly coloured, easy to get—and fast. The New York Fire Department makes its own colourful contribution *below* with fire hydrants that are impossible to miss



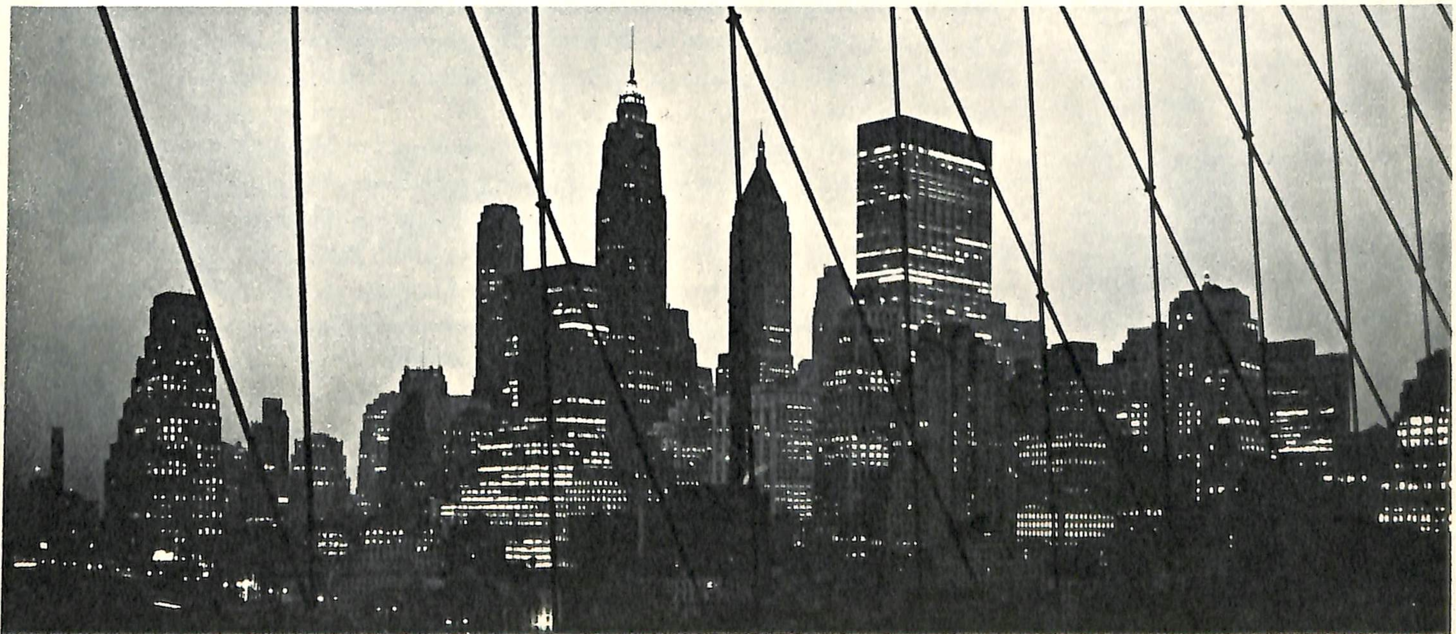
motives. There are palaces full of great pictures in New York, and millions go each year to see them. Each week a whole page of the *New York Times* is filled with concert announcements. There are incomparable museums, a lively theatre, great publishing houses, a famous university. The *Times* itself ('All the News That's Fit to Print') is a splendid civic ornament, sometimes mistaken, often dull, but never bitter, cheap or malicious; at lunch in its palatial offices this grace is said:

O Lord, the Giver of All Good,
In whose just Hands are all our Times,
We thank Thee for our daily Food
Gathered (as News) from many Climes.
Bless All of Us around this Board
And all beneath this ample Roof;
What we find fit to print, O Lord,
Is, after all, the Pudding's Proof.
May Those we welcome come again
May Those who stay be glad, Amen.

And the city itself, with its sharp edges and fiery colours, is a thing of beauty; especially seen from above, with Central Park startlingly green among the skyscrapers, with the tall towers of Wall Street hazy in the distance, with the two waterways blue and sunny and the long line of an Atlantic liner slipping away to sea. It is a majestic sight, with no Wordsworth at hand to honour it, only a man with a loudspeaker or a fifty-cent guide book.

So leaving Manhattan is like retreating from a snow summit. When you drive back along the highway the very air seems to relax about you. The electric atmosphere softens, the noise stills, the colours blur and fade, the pressure eases, the traffic thins. Soon you are out of the city's spell, only pausing to look behind, over the tenements and marshes, to see the lights of the skyscrapers riding the night.

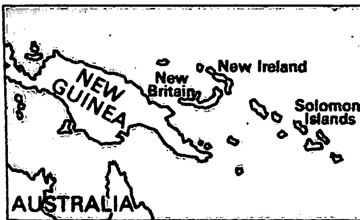
The lights of Lower Manhattan. The enormous slab-sided block is the sixty-storey Chase Manhattan Tower, in the Wall Street area at the southern tip of Manhattan. It was built in 1961, and rises above a plaza surrounded by hawthorn trees. Manhattan seems to come alive after dark: subway trains run all night, stores stay open late, and few bars close before 4.30 a.m.



MASLYN WILLIAMS

Stone Age dancers

In the highlands of New Britain—an island in the New Guinea group—live the Bainings, a primitive tribe of whom less than 4,000 survive. Like other peoples with one foot in the Stone Age, their ancestral festivals form an important part of their lives—though nowadays under the sympathetic supervision of the local Christian clergy



I SPOKE to Simon, the local Methodist minister, telling him that I would like, if it would not offend, to see something of the preparations for the ritual dances. He called two men, and when they agreed we went into the bush and followed a narrow track that brought us, in five or six minutes, into a small clearing.

There were five lads in the clearing, three of whom were withdrawn into the darkest corner of a bush shelter, where they stood peering out at us like young animals as we came upon them. They had been disturbed, no doubt, by the clumsiness of my approach, realizing that only a white man would make so much noise walking through the bush. But the men with me spoke to them and they came slowly out into the open.

The other two lads, though naked except for a narrow band of cloth drawn round the waist and pulled tightly between the legs, seemed less embarrassed. One was fitting a mask over the other's head, twisting it so that it came down to cover his neck and rest upon his shoulders. These masks are made of tapa cloth or pandanus leaves sewn together and stretched over a frame of thin cane, shaped into the semblance of strange, imaginary animals with big disc-like ears and flat, protruding lips.

Some of them look oddly like primitive caricatures of Mickey Mouse; others are shaped like great birds' heads but with long, pendulous tongues hanging from the lower bill, and a high ornamental excrescence growing above the nostrils. The masks are decorated with formal designs of big bull's-eye circles, and connected triangles, coloured red, brown and white, and are fringed all round the neck with long streamers of shredded leaves so that when worn they not only cover the head but hang down in a wild mane over the shoulders.

They are called *aios* or *miaus* (which Simon later told me is the native Baining word for a spirit). The dances in which the masks are worn are called by the same name, and are known as spirit dances; and the men who wear the masks represent ancestral ghosts. The red markings are made with the blood of the man who will wear the mask. He cuts his tongue with a leaf folded in two, and chews the cut to bring blood, and this he spits into a cup that is half a coconut shell or gourd. Then he paints the design on to his mask with a stick of cane chewed to make a brush;

or he just spits the blood straight on to the mask and smears it with his finger.

One of my companions explained these things to me with signs and faltering Pidgin English, and I understood that these young men were initiates who had not previously taken part in the sacred dances of the spirits. They had, he said, been living in secret for several days, a period of purification, during which they had fasted except for water, and would not eat until the big feast which followed the dance. In that time they had seen no women, and no women would see them until the time of the feast, for all females are sent into their huts while the sacred dance is done.

In other parts of the bush young men from other villages were being decorated for their initiatory appearances, and elsewhere the older men were congregated to make their own special preparations for the dance.

At four o'clock, or thereabouts, we heard the drums start, and my guides said that we must go back, because it would be ill-mannered of them to miss dances being done by the visitors.

The village was alive when we arrived, with most of the people crowded round a small group of four dancing men, each of whom wore a high hat made of wicker-work trimmed with leaves and bark, towering twelve feet or more above his head, each hat held in place by three or four men holding long props attached to the top of it. They shuffled round in a small space hemmed in by villagers, scuffling the dust and giving little hops, while the prop-holders juggled to keep the hats in place. There was no apparent pattern in the dance, and it seemed that the excitement derived from a form of contest between the dancers trying to dislodge the hats, and the prop-holders striving to keep them upright.

The Malabunga people, being hosts, were busy with other things. Men carrying great logs laid them in the centre of the village to form foundations for three fires that would be lit at sundown, spaced as the points of a triangle; and women came in slow procession, one after the other, with bundles and baskets of food, laying them out on a carpet of coconut fronds thirty or forty yards long and six feet wide. They came with sweet potatoes and yams, bunches of edible leaves, sticks of sugar-cane and bundles of big-leafed taro; with here and there a small basket of tomatoes, cucumbers, melons, beans and a few cobs of corn, all of which have been lately introduced into the village gardens.

Meanwhile there were more dances, some for men and others for women, among them a spear dance with its wistful recollection of the old days when war was normal. Then a sugar-cane dance with overtones of sex symbolism, the women carrying sticks of sugar-cane on their shoulders and, after they had danced provokingly, presenting them to the men who were drumming for the dance.

Then suddenly it was dark and the fires were lit. Excited children dragged thick faggots of dry sticks across the village and threw them clumsily on to the fires, sending up sprays of sparks; and hot air rising swiftly stirred the overhanging fronds of coconut palms, making them click together, with firelight flashing on their undersides.

A voice, high-pitched and primitive, cut clearly across the background of crackling fires and children's voices and the dull thud of drums, sending a jet of song high in the air, to be answered with a surge of sound as fifty men or more responded in a chorus out of the shadows. They were standing in a group, not yet settled



A masked New Guinea dancer leaping through the flames of a fire. The dancing and chanting, going on for hour after hour, induce a hypnotic trance which makes the dancer insensitive to the pain he would normally feel

down but milling about quietly like musicians taking their places in an orchestra, and as they moved they sang, freely and uninhibited, answering the solo voice without hesitation.

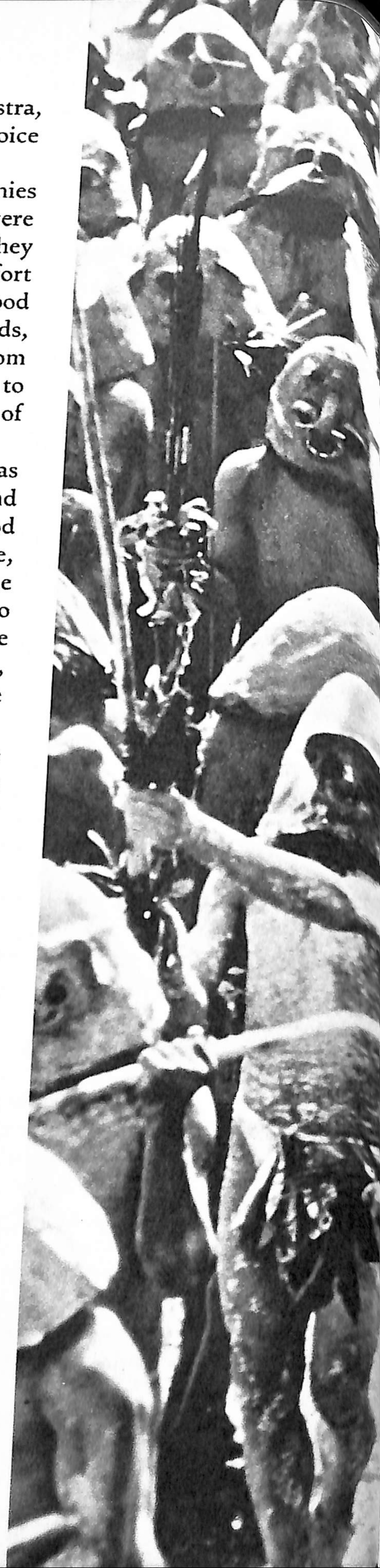
It was evidently a prelude or introduction to the main part of the ceremonies that they were singing, for it lasted only a few minutes, as though they were seeking pitch or tuning, or settling on a cadence. Then, apparently satisfied, they squatted down in a tight cluster, elbowing themselves into positions of comfort while keeping close together, but separated into rows by long logs of heavy wood laid on the ground between each line of men. Every man held in his two hands, vertically, a bamboo tube, two inches in diameter but varying in length from three to six feet or thereabouts, and these they bounced firmly on to the logs to produce a resonant percussive sound, each bamboo having a different pitch of sound according to its length.

For a while they appeared only to practise, singing short strophes and cadenzas of onomatopœic song that seemed torn off, without beginning or ending, and tossed about haphazardly on sudden, short spurts of drumming. It was a period of hiatus in the ceremonies. A few stragglers seemed to dance without purpose, and men went about straightening the fires and fetching new logs, while the singers fidgeted, some changing places, others discarding one length of bamboo to try another. Then, when there was almost nothing happening, and most of the people were sitting quietly talking under the trees or round the steps of the houses, and the night seemed to have missed its climax and become dull, the moon came up, full-blown and butter-yellow.

The orchestra stirred for a moment and then sat silent. A man walked across the empty village and threw a great bundle of kindling sticks on to each fire, so that great yellow and red flames shot up and brought life into the night. The leading singer threw back his head, stretching his mouth wide open like a dog about to howl, and a long-drawn, eerie, frightening sound found its way out of his throat, to be drowned in a wave of thunderous drumming.

All round the village men moved out of the shadows, coming closer in to the light of the fires, and little boys stood up uncertainly, excited but in part afraid, not knowing quite what to do, wondering whether to run for protection to the women (now obediently inside the houses or watching discreetly from the shadows), or whether to stay and prove themselves men. The decision was a serious one, because the rising moon, the new song, and the fires brought to flame, were together a sign that the *aios*, the ancestor spirits, were standing now at the entrance to the village.

From infancy each boy of the Bainings has been taught to fear the wrath of his dead ancestors just as Christian children were formerly brought up to fear the fires of hell. He knows, this Baining child, that when he is old enough to stay awake and watch the *miaus* dance he will meet his ancestors' ghosts face to face, and that if he has offended them during his short life by bad behaviour, they will punish him there and then. So, as they wait for the first of the spirit dancers to



The enormous energy and aggressiveness of the New Guinea Highlanders find expression in a never-ending variety of rituals and feasts. The ancient Moga festival, whose climax used to be the slaying of hundreds of domestic pigs, has now been made a part of the annual fair held at Goroka. The masked Highlanders cover their bodies with clay, and during the ceremony perform a ritual battle of ghosts



appear, the hearts of the little naked lads of Malabunga flutter, and they squat back in the shadows tightly hugging their knees, their mouths and eyes wide open with apprehension, watching.

The spirit dancer came slowly, emerging from the outside dark into the moonlit village, progressing by slow gyrations into the firelight until he reached the singers and stood before them, his great horned and duck-billed head nodding and rolling on his long-maned neck. His body shone black, spread with soot and pig fat from neck to knees. The black was broken below the thighs with wide bands of white. Gaiters of grass were tied like sheaves round the lower part of his legs, and armlets of frayed grass hung from his elbows. A python, thick as a forearm and ten feet long, was draped across his shoulders. He held it by head and tail, its body hanging in twin loops, one on either side.

The bamboos thundered a strong staccato while he stood there. Then, as he turned away, the drumming died to a rumble and the voices rose above it, building up layer on layer of sound in a manner most astonishing: unmusical yet harmonic, barbarous but controlled and tightly disciplined, so that a whole body of separate sounds soared and swooped and looped through tonal evolutions like a flock of starlings flying at twilight. Then it stopped as suddenly as it had started, leaving only the rumble of the bamboo tubes knocking quietly on the logs; until within a minute the next dancer appeared.

They came, one after another in ritual procession, fifteen in all, each making a circuit of the village periphery. Each wore a mask, similar in style but of distinctive design. Some swung snakes as though they were skipping-ropes, jumping through the loops as they swung; others carried several snakes intertwined; and some were without snakes but carried slabs of bleeding pig meat. And for each dancer the singing drummers made their marvellous sound. Whether it was improvized, or formalized by generations of tradition, whether it was learned or created spontaneously, I have no way of knowing; but it was fantastic and fascinating. The last dancer displayed himself and for a few minutes the fifteen stood together in a block, swinging and manipulating the snakes (already unfanged). Then the music stopped as though cut off with a chopper, and everybody relaxed. The dancers disappeared again into the blackness beyond the village to rest, and other Malabunga men took the snakes and killed them to eat later. The singers passed drinking water to each other in bamboos or bottles, and other men renewed the fires, and brought more bundles of kindling sticks and leaned them against the trees. The huge yellow moon hung low over the heads of the coconut palms.

In half an hour, or a little more, the singers settled down, creating again an air of expectancy, and as before a single wild cry came from a wide-open throat, issuing an invitation, half beseeching, half afraid, to the spirits of Malabunga, asking them to come and show themselves once more among the people. This time there was no drumming to announce the coming of the ghosts. After the solitary invocation the choir was silent, and out of the quiet night beyond the village there came a single droning note, a deep-voiced siren sound lower than a bass flute. As it came closer a vague movement took definite shape, and a great framework, eight feet long and six feet high, draped with bark and palm leaves, was carried into the village. This was the *kavat*—the holy image and sacred symbol of the source of things. It was a double framework of split cane covered with tapa cloth, with

incised patterns and painted designs, made with two sides like a steep-pitched roof. Two men inside carried it by straps of vine hung on their shoulders; and one of them blew through a bamboo tube.

The *kavat* made a circuit of the village clearing, then moved away to one end. The drumming began again, and the singing, soaring voices. Then the spirit men came pouring back into the firelight, together this time with free hands and no formal movement, but chasing here and there, racing round the village seeking for small boys to frighten, grabbing at them, making them run, dumb with terror, to their fathers. I saw a little lad caught, tucked under a dancer's arm, and carried, ashen-grey and face transfixed with fear, his small round stomach convulsing, across the village, in and out of the fires, and then put down again on the other side to lie like dead, drained of every feeling but fear, unable to get up and run away.

A second *kavat* came out of the bush and into the village, and they both jogged round and round and back and forth across the clearing, making a background for the dancers, who came racing back to jump through the fires and scuffle with their feet among the piled-up embers and hot wood-coals, sending up showers of sparks and ash and tongues of flame. And all the time the singers, with heads thrown back and throats extended, forced out long wreathing streamers of violent, barbarous sound, bashing and stamping down on the log drums with their bamboo tubes in an ecstasy of expression.

I went to bed at midnight, in the schoolroom, while the dancing went on. But my head was full of the sound of people believing, and I did not sleep a great deal.

Highlanders decked out for ceremonial feasting and dancing. They wear the plumes of the bird of paradise, cassowary feathers, gold-lip pearl shells, cuscus fur, and tapa cloth made from tree bark and decorated with painted designs. A nineteenth-century traveller recorded that bird of paradise plumes, which are still an indication of wealth among the natives, commanded 'ridiculous prices all along the New Guinea coast—sometimes as much as fifteen shillings a plume'



MICHAEL CARROLL

Tourist salad days

In the Greek islands, and especially the smaller ones off the beaten track, the early summer sees a frenzy of hurried improvization, of repainting houses and tavernas, and refurbishing elderly boats. Though the well-oiled routine of the larger resorts is lacking, enthusiasm for the tourist trade is keyed to an even higher pitch





TOWARDS the end of June there is a stirring in the Greek islands, a feeling of expectancy: the tourist season is about to begin. The little hotels on Skiathos and Skopelos, in the Northern Sporades, have had their new coats of paint; now they are ready and waiting. In private houses all over Skiathos village families are drawing closer together, as far as living-space is concerned, contracting like concertinas. Every family that has or can find a spare room in the house is busy spring-cleaning it, turning mattresses and laying out white linen, while self-styled plumbers have a busy time putting in order those strangely indispensable modern appliances to which they know foreigners attach so much importance – the lavatory and, if such a luxury exists, the shower.

The 'night-club' in Skiathos is about to open. The new juke-box, which has been sitting in the smart café on the front, seeming all these warm early evenings to have gone mad with shaking power, blasting out a dozen times over and over again tunes that were popular once last year and that now set the bones of their unwilling listeners rattling with fury–this monster is about to be moved.

Along the quay are lined the tripper caiques, boats with rows of wooden seats, long awnings, ready to ply a rapid passenger service to the beaches of Lalaria and Koukounaries, round-the-island tours, to Kastro and Akladies. In a few weeks, at about nine every morning, the harbour will look like the scene of some medieval sea-battle. Most of the caiques have exhaust pipes the size of cannon that stick out horizontally at deck level on each side. When they start their engines together, puffs of smoke belching from the mouth of every cylinder, it seems exactly as if they are delivering broadsides into each other at point-blank range.

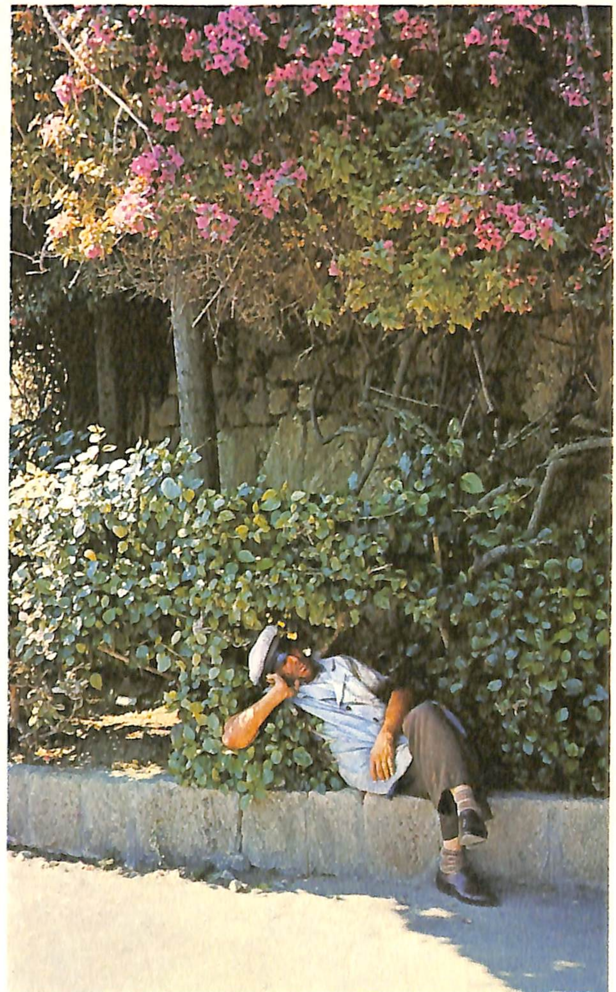
The tavernas of both islands, too, are gearing themselves for the rush, hiring waiters from the mainland town of Volos for the season, black-coated professionals skilled at juggling with plates and orders, who will be on their feet fourteen hours in twenty-four, while the taverna owner himself will be lucky to close his eyes for two. Skiathos is ready. And even now some tourists are arriving, just off the *Paskhalis,* led with exquisite politeness to rooms or tables, while the fishermen and

Working the land on the Greek islands is hard, and methods have changed little over the centuries. Few farms are as fertile as this one near Apollonia on Sifnos, one of the Cyclades, off the coast of the Peloponnese south-east of Athens





Roof-top view from the monastery on Patmos, the most northerly of the Dodecanese Islands off the western coast of Turkey. The monastery is supposed to have been built on the spot where St. John dictated to his disciple Prochorus the Fourth Gospel, the Johannine Epistles and the Revelation. The monks reverently point out a crack in the rock caused—so legend has it—by the voice of God



The harbour and its quays are the focus of activity on Paros, as on all the Greek islands. But it was not always so. Although the harbours have the same names and occupy the same sites as in classical times, few of the buildings are older than the mid-nineteenth century. The Turks, after conquering Constantinople in the fifteenth century, made no attempt to protect the islands against pirates and corsairs, and the islanders were forced to retreat from the waterfront into a 'Kastro', or fortified town, in the interior. Security returned only when Greece won her independence in 1829. Ancient fishing skills, such as making nets *right,* repairing sails and constructing boats, were soon re-learnt as the islanders came down from their Kastro in the hills to rebuild their harbours





The Aegean is rich in fish—red mullet, tunny and thin jade-boned garfish which, like the northern whiting, is delicate in flavour if eaten within a few hours of being landed. Also caught are langoustes, crabs and octopus

locals turn from their conversations to eye these shy newcomers with a novel interest soon to be dulled if not extinguished altogether by familiarity and the sheer volume of those about to come.

In Skopelos preparations echo those in Skiathos, but here the evidence is not so clear, and the feverish atmosphere so apparent on her sister isle is absent. George Kaliantzis is getting ready to step up production of his marvellous chocolate cakes, the *baklava, kataifi,* and the rest. His small, white-coated figure is becoming a familiar sight now, skipping under the plane trees with his morning tray of *tiropidhes* (flake-pastry triangles stuffed with hot cheese), and people have already begun to estimate, in whispers, as they do every year, the staggering profits he is likely to make again this season.

Over by Yiorgo's workshop Mad Yiannis is mustering the female members of his family, his aunt, mother, wife, and if only she could walk, his grandmother, drilling them to their tasks behind the counter and among the copper cooking pans and pots, and sitting down between whiles to shake his white head in hopeless desperation. No wonder Yiannis is worried with all those women chattering round him. Yiannis, too, has hired a waiter from Volos this summer, a burly young man called Stephanos, already popular because of his sense of humour; and there are two little boys, Spyraki and Onouphri, so small that when they scamper towards you with a pile of dishes in their arms you cannot but wonder whether you are a victim of some cartoon hallucination and being attacked by an army of plates with legs. All this assistance is just as well.

'It's not going to be like last year, oh no!' says Yiannis to me with a sudden attempt at firmness as I sip the glass of wine he has offered me. Last year he tried to do everything himself, helped only by one boy who, when the pressure became too great one evening, simply ran away. But by that time customers had become so

A fisherman checks his nets on the waterfront. He will later repack them in the baskets so that they can be cast without getting into tangles. On Skiathos workmen build caiques using as a blueprint a wooden model of half the vessel, as in eighteenth-century English shipyards



furious with waiting for their dinners that Yiannis was forced to retire behind the safe ramparts of his smoking stoves, and that gentle, vague expression came to his face, with only the eyes rolling wildly to betray the true state of his emotions, and in the face of hungry diners-out leaving their tables to storm his kitchen, merely stood speechlessly, waving his hands with feeble abandon.

Yiannis is not really mad at all, only rather vague. He is not really cut out to run a high-powered restaurant, to cope with over twenty tables set out under the planes and mulberry trees by the waterside and filled with ravenous tourists, as in the summer he tries to do. Yet in spite of the delays and breakdowns people who know him always eat there, and if one has often to go and collect one's own food from the kitchen and sometimes knives and forks as well, at least there is kept a pleasant informality about the place.

Violent scenes in his kitchen at the peak hours of the evening meal are frequent. People are jostling to grab plates of his *moussaka* or *stifado,* all ordering and demanding at once while Yiannis stands looking helplessly from one to the other. He insists on doing the actual serving from the counter himself. His wife may pile the plates with food, but Yiannis must hand them over. Once, when the pressure had mounted to more than usual heights and Yiannis seemed to have abdicated—standing amid all the uproar quite silent, and remote, ruminating it appeared on higher things—his wife had the temerity to pass over a plate of *kebāb* to an impatient customer. Yiannis came to life. With a cryof indignation he laid hands on the plate. For a whole minute there ensued a furious but silent struggle: three people were pulling at the plate—the customer, grimly holding on, Yiannis, and his wife. The plate did not, as I feared, split in three. Yiannis won. As the other two let go he staggered back, victorious. For a moment he did not know what to do, and then, by way of a consolation prize, seized a handful of fried potatoes, threw them on the plate, and presented it back to the astounded customer.

High summer does not suit Yiannis and his taverna. He is at his best when there are fewer people and there is plenty of time: in the early spring, in autumn and winter when there is a cold wind blowing outside, and the salt spray is dashing at his windows, and inside among the half-dozen tables the atmosphere is warm and friendly and full of appetizing smells. Then Yiannis comes into his own, telling his stories to the laughter of his guests, sitting with them at their tables, treating them to the extra half-litre of wine, talking, smiling, listening.

One winter his chimney caught fire. Flames and smoke belched out of the roof-top, and there was a panic among the neighbours for fear of the upper storey catching light. An excited crowd gathered, and for a couple of hours there was a scene of fearful activity: everyone was shouting, calling out advice to each other at the tops of their voices, carrying buckets of water from the harbour and pouring them over the taverna, cannoning into each other as they ran back for more—everyone, that is, except Yiannis. Yiannis was stretched out on the quay. He had fainted.

There were rumours, too, of Grigor and the modern-style tourist 'pavilion' built by the government near the beach. It was said that the place was at last opening as a restaurant, and Grigor, assisted by his wife, was to be the manager. I had

Islanders enjoy the cool of the evening. In summer the islands are invigorated by the Meltemi, the prevailing northerly wind of the Aegean Sea, which gives them a briskness and clarity even greater than that of mainland Greece





The ingenuity of food vendors in using every square inch of shade and every possible alcove to protect their goods is matched only by the variety of their offerings. Olives, grapes, sweetmeats stuffed with nuts or flavoured with anis, almond cakes, smoked meat with herbs and garlic—every island has its speciality

confirmation of this from Grigor himself, suddenly transformed into a man overpowered by work and worry and the responsibilities of the venture. 'Sure,' he said breathlessly as I caught him hurrying under the plane trees to his new restaurant, 'we open about two weeks. Maybe. Fishing? No time now. Work, work. You're going to eat real well soon, you see! Real high-class food!' He chuckled happily as he sped on.

Vangeli backed his friend's assertions. 'Yes,' he said loyally, 'Grigor is quite a good cook. I've been giving him lessons.'

Mitsos came into Skopelos harbour today, with his extraordinary looking forty-foot motor boat with rows of old bus seats inside, painted a bright blue and white and called the *Doxa* ('Thanks'). In the spring *Doxa* was alongside *Astarte* on the beach at Vassiliko. While I was covering *Astarte*'s keel and myself with anti-fouling paint Mitsos was laying long strips of what looked like, and was, cardboard across his long cabin roof, and painting the low rails at the stern a dazzling white. Like many of the Greeks of the Sporades Mitsos is fair, with blue eyes. He has an engaging grin and a generous nature. He has announced that from now on I am going to teach him English.

Mitsos has been having some trouble with his boat. He had built her in Alonnisos, and installed an enormously powerful second-hand German diesel engine, so heavy that when it was bedded in the stern the bows tilted sharply up in the air, giving her a somewhat unusual appearance which certain people, not least Vangeli, had been quick to point out. Since last summer the position of the engine had been changed, but unfortunately it had this time been placed too far forward, and the resulting dip in the bows was still the subject of much ribald comment. This imbalance, however, did not prevent her from charging along at over nine knots, making *Doxa* the fastest boat of her size in the Sporades. She could take about thirty people sitting in some comfort, providing the sea was calm.

Doxa is now moored stern-on to the quay at Skopelos. All is ready. Mitsos drinks ouzo with me outside Evangelo's coffee house and is taking a brotherly interest in my general welfare. 'When is Angelina coming?' he asks. 'Not for a couple of months,' I reply.

'Ah,' he says. 'That's not good. It's bad to be without a woman. For one thing, it's unhealthy.' Mitsos is married, but his wife of course remains in Alonnisos. During the summer he is away from her for a great deal of the time, and he admits that the sight of so many attractive young women decked out in bikinis and sun-tans disturbs him. Life, he told me, can become difficult, complicated. 'You must be careful,' he warns me. 'Just because it's so easy here in the summer, that's no good reason.'

I agree with him, but Mitsos is not satisfied. A bevy of pretty girls, probably from Saloniki, trips by our table. Mitsos lays his hand on my arm, and I start guiltily. 'You were looking at them,' he says in an accusing tone of voice.

'I was only counting them,' I reply uneasily.

'Don't,' says Mitsos firmly. 'Don't count them. It only makes it worse.'

Instead we concentrate on the two little tripper boats, newly painted and with smart blue and yellow cushions on the seats, tied up next to *Doxa*. Notices, painfully inscribed on little boards, advertise the fact that they are for hire. One is called *Andromytos*, the 'Undaunted', another 'Brave Captain Yiorgo'. Bunches of



Islanders share a newspaper in the shade of a whitewashed wall. Like the ancient Greeks, the islanders are absorbed in politics, and political problems and personalities are constantly discussed.

flowers are set in plastic vases on each side of the bows, and on the stern seat of one of the boats is fixed a large photograph framed in old silver of a woman in a long dress and white hair. The photograph looks as if it was taken in about 1900.

'Who could that be?' I ask Mitsos. Mitsos is willing to do anything to distract me and together we get up and have a closer look. A grey-haired old man is sitting in the boat shining up the brass. It is brave Captain Yiorgo himself, having named his boat, as often happens, after himself. He looks up when we speak to him. 'That's my mother,' he says proudly, and when I murmur something appreciative he leans forward to give the glass another polish.

Back in Skiathos I have coffee with Gus by the harbour side and together we consider the prospect of the coming season. 'More people than ever, I guess,' says Gus. But Gus is not too happy. He likes to help out tourists, especially English and Americans: he likes to talk to them. Sometimes, however, tourists suspect him of wanting to get something out of them, though this does not prevent them using him whenever they feel the need. Anyone who wants to find a room in Skiathos, to hire a boat, to find the way to Kastro, will be told 'Ask Gus', and Gus will oblige, very often going to endless trouble bargaining with the house-owner, the boatman, making sure that the foreigner gets a reasonable price. Often, if it is a

question of making an expedition across the island, Gus will not only find the mules but will sometimes go along as a guide.

For these services Gus has never asked for any reward. He has a farm in the hills, as well as a house in the village. He has no need to make money out of tourists, yet, as he says, when people take up his time for a whole day, or sometimes—as some of the English have done—for days at a time, he would be glad of some recognition even if it was only recognition as a friend, the offer of a drink or a coffee: not because he cannot afford these things himself but simply because of the spirit implied in such an invitation, the friendliness he has offered being returned.

There is a plan that Gus is toying with, and which I enthusiastically support, that would make him a kind of official interpreter for tourists on the island. Certainly someone who speaks English and has the local knowledge that tourists need would be a great advantage. The idea is to rent a little office next to Jimmy Delhiyanni's chandler's shop—Jimmy is the official tourist representative on Skiathos—with a large notice outside: *Interpreter.* Any opposition to this scheme is likely to come from Jimmy himself. It will be necessary, he said, to get permission from Athens. It will take a long time.



An old fisherwoman of Rhodes. Though the younger women of the islands are emancipated in accordance with the ideals of the twentieth century, the older women still wear the traditional black costume, and keep the subservient role imposed on them by the Turks

Jimmy was more interested in my opinion of his latest tourist bait: what did I think of his amphorae? He was very excited about them. 'Come and see,' he said proudly, 'real antiques, thousands of years old!'

I went to have a look. He had bought a number off the trawlers who occasionally fetch them up in their nets, and they were now set on the floor by the counter, some of them three feet high, ready for the tourists and offered for sale at huge prices. Most of them were beautifully shaped and were encrusted with convolutions of embedded marine growth, but I was startled to see that on some of them Jimmy had clearly added a number of shells, carefully stuck on with glue.

'Well?' he said, stepping back triumphantly, 'fine, aren't they?'

'Yes,' I said, 'but what about these extra shells?'

'What about them?'

I tried to point out that such obvious additions were likely to shake the confidence of the most gullible tourist, but Jimmy waved aside my possibly naïve objection with impatience. 'No, no. You don't understand. You see—they can have whatever they like, they can choose: ones with shells, or ones without!'

Gus shook his head sadly, muttering, 'They'll think we're all crooks here, that's what they'll think.'

There is no doubt that whatever the moral degeneration that tourists are alleged, probably quite correctly, to bring in their wake, their presence gives the islanders a great deal to do, to think and talk about, and to look at. They are interesting; and no summer passes without some unusual event connected with them. The only trouble is that in Skiathos, as in so many small communities where making money out of foreigners is becoming a habit, the islanders tend to withdraw themselves, to look upon the tourist not so much as an individual but as an object, someone to live off. In Skopelos this rather sad stage has not yet been reached. The islanders are still uncynical; they react to individual foreigners—they like them, or they don't. They have not yet had to shield themselves with indifference.

The picturesque windmills on the High Hills behind Mykonos, with their twelve flag-like sails, are hardly used nowadays. Most grain is sent to the mainland for milling



Bus ride in Spain

A ride on the tightly packed bus from Madrid to Toledo, the ancient capital of Castile, has all the friendly intimacy of the coach journeys described by Dickens. The discomfort is more than outweighed by the ebullient friendliness of the passengers, and by the insight gained into the true spirit of the Spanish people



A SPANIARD was standing on my feet and I was holding a small child: in other words the bus from Madrid to Toledo was almost full. In some amazing way more people managed to force themselves in, driving those who were already standing into even closer intimacy. The small brother of the child I was holding had once been standing near me in the aisle, but now he had been swept forward and I could see his mournful little face drowning in a sea of serge.

Sitting in front of me were two nuns who wore immense wimples of starched linen, but they were more architectural than wimples: they were really a survival of those elaborate and laundered head-dresses of the Middle Ages, like the *hennin*, or steeple, which towered, slanted and drooped in infinite variety through the fifteenth century, with many a reproach from the pulpit and many a compliment from the troubadour. They were designed not for a small motor-bus but for an ample world of gateways, and I noticed with admiration how skilfully the nuns wore them from force of habit and, like cats, which know the exact width of their whiskers, were aware to a fraction of an inch how much they might move their heads without causing a linen collision above them. It was curious to think that a naughty head-dress which was designed as a provoking piece of coquetry should have come to rest at last upon the heads of nuns.

Even the good manners of the Spanish travelling public were shaken, and a few protests were made, as a huge barrel of a man tried to board the bus with a basket from which protruded, with an expression of fiery indignation, the head of a cockerel. Holy saints, couldn't he see that there was not even room for a *langostino*? All right, but perhaps—just perhaps, *señores*—there might be room for one more *sardina*! This sally made him popular, and people drew in their breath and crushed even closer as this amusing *hombre* entered with his bird and soon had those at the back of the bus laughing at his jokes. How like the Irish the Spaniards can be! At last the bus began to vibrate. There were several reports like pistol shots. A girl crossed herself. A box in the roof announced that we were going to hear the *Waltz Emperador*, and, to a gay lilt of Strauss, we took the road to Toledo.

Spain is penetrated to its inmost recesses by motor vehicles which become smaller and more venerable as you leave the main highways. There are first-class coaches

which cruise along at sixty miles an hour and there are humbler buses, with or without radios, in one of which I was now travelling. Like all things in Spain, the bus service recalls an older world. Coach travel must have been like this in the time of Dickens. The objects roped on the roof had the look of luggage in a coaching print, and one's fellow travellers somehow created the atmosphere that one was not a stray bit of matter being transported from here to there, but a member of a band of pilgrims engaged upon the adventure of journeying about the world, with a stock of food which was to be shared, together with opinions on life in general. When the bus drew up steaming in a village, there was usually time to get out and smoke a cigarette or visit the local inn.

The mother whose child I was holding was a pretty young woman dressed in black, with a string of Majorcan pearls around her ivory throat. She held her youngest child, I was holding the middle one, and the eldest was, as I have said, standing. They were all boys, she told me, with the smug air of a fulfilled and successful female, then she added, with a little smile for the contrariness of men, that her husband wanted the next to be a girl. I asked if they had a name for this dream child, who, I suspected, was perhaps with us in more than spirit, and she said, yes, they had decided to call her, as so many thousands of Spanish women are called, Pilar, in honour of *Nuestra Señora del Pilar* at Zaragoza. She thought I was an American. She told me that she had a cousin who had emigrated to America and lived in Rio de Janeiro. To her, as to most Spaniards, America meant South America. Her husband was an official in the *Ayuntamiento,* the Town Hall, in Madrid, and she was going to Toledo because her old parents, who lived there, wanted to see their grandchildren. I could imagine the kissing and the hugging when *los niños* were greeted.

The road to Toledo is not a particularly interesting one. At one point our journey became exciting and dangerous. Our driver decided that it was a point of honour to pass a stubborn small car that held the road in front. He challenged the car with

A bus waits for passengers in the glare of the mid-day Spanish sun. Heat and lack of rain leave the streets dry and dusty; the houses huddle on either side to create shade, and open doorways give glimpses of tiled halls and cool inner courts. Blinds and shutters are kept closed during the day, and in the evening women sit talking outside their doors and on the narrow balconies



his horn and then the duel began, with feints towards the side of the road, thrusting and withdrawing, the gears roaring and clashing, until, with a final *suerte,* we lurched victoriously past and had a swift, satisfactory glimpse of our opponent crouched over the wheel, motionless, with his foot down on the accelerator.

The bus became half empty at Illescas and we could breathe again. Illescas, where white-robed nuns preside over several splendid and pristine El Grecos. I wished there was time—the usual regret of the stranger in Spain—but already the driver was blowing his horn and the passengers, emerging from *ventas, posadas* and *caballeros,* were converging on the bus.

The brown landscape unwound itself, with a hint of browner hills on the sky. Men rode mules beside the road; in the fields the grain, stacked in small stooks as in Scotland, was being loaded upon the backs of donkeys, and piled upon wagons drawn by black oxen. We would swing into white villages where a tall church towered over the cottages and men in shirt-sleeves would be waiting for us at the bus stop. We would throw them a bag, or a mysterious bundle sewn in sacking and, our mission of civilization completed, depart. Women sat on low stools at cottage doors, sewing or making lace, gravely lifting their eyes to watch us.



Castile is an economically backward region, and the standard of living of the peasants is low. Most of them work on the land, which, apart from the more fertile plains, is gaunt and barren. Their way of life is simple—the women help their husbands in the fields and, among their many domestic tasks, wash at the fountain and plait wool for clothes

We stopped at last at the foot of a mighty hill and I got out of the bus and glanced up. I saw the city of Toledo sitting in the solemnity of the late afternoon, like an old knight with a sword across his knees. The city rose in tiers, a rising mass of roof tiles from which the towers of churches were lifted against a blue sky. It was like a hill town in Italy, but much starker, for no cypresses rose from the terraces. The bus appeared to gather itself for the supreme moment of its day and, turning at a Moorish gateway, began to grind up the hill into Toledo.

We came to rest in an ancient plaza where Toledans were sipping coffee and eating ices at cafés beneath an arcade. Happy, happy Spain, where there is always time to sip coffee and where to be busy is not a virtue! In line with us against the pavement were other buses, one from Seville, and all with the air of coaches waiting for the ostler to lead out the new team. There, sure enough, were grandpa and grandma in their best black clothes, waving handkerchiefs at the coach windows in an ecstasy of family piety, and when *los niños* descended the old people enveloped their small descendants with cries of delight.

There was no nonsense about a taxi. The hotel boots shouldered my bag and led the way across the plaza down a street as thin as a knife where the balconies almost met overhead. The boy led on and up over the cobbles to a hotel in a street as narrow as the rest. Groaning, I climbed five flights of stairs, but my reward was a room from whose balcony I could see, beyond the roof of a tenement opposite, a great brown slice of Toledo, its towers and domes gilded by the setting sun. Then church bells began to ring, not sweet bells or chiming bells, but deep-throated, rather angry Catholic bells. A girl in an attic opposite, with coils of glossy jet hair about her shoulders, drew a curtain, smiled at me and coquettishly drew the curtain back again. I heard from somewhere below one of Nature's unmistakable sounds, strange, I thought in Toledo, the cry of a Siamese cat. I found it at last on a balcony to the left, sitting there sending out its harsh, infantile cry. And the sound of angry bells continued to boom over Toledo and to flow in an urgent, vibrating river through the canyons of its streets, saying clearly: 'Attention, you miserable sinners, remember the Glory of God!'



The ancient city of Toledo stands on a granite hill overlooking the deep gorge of the Tagus. It is dominated by the magnificent Gothic cathedral and by the square ruined fortress of the Alcazar

The friendly Faroes

The Faroes are a cluster of green islands, like an afterthought on the map, in the North Atlantic between the Shetlands and Iceland. Once part of the Viking empire, they now form a country where a humorous and friendly people proudly maintain their own language and culture, and one of the world's oldest parliaments





THE WRINKLED blue floor of the North Atlantic was clear below us. In the distance was a line of clouds hanging above the warmer waters of the Gulf Stream. As we got nearer we could see that these clouds were caught on the prongs of rocks rising from the ocean. These were the Faroes. And as we descended, there was Mykines, the westernmost island, with its little village among fields greener than the green slopes above it, and huge basalt cliffs, grey and black in the afternoon light and looking like a ruined border castle ten times magnified.

As we neared the airport on Vágar, the next island, we could see the colonies of puffins, kittiwakes, fulmars (whose wings smell like violets) and guillemots who nest in their thousands on these cliffs. The small airport with its friendly customs shed in the middle of the island could be standing on Bodmin Moor, with Dozmary Pool beside it. There was a faint mist and no sign of life except for taxis and buses waiting to take us to Tórshavn, the capital, on the neighbouring island of Streymoy. The airport was built by Britain during the second World War when Faroese ships were sailing for the Allies under their own flag, and faraway Denmark—of which the Faroes were then a county—was occupied by the Germans.

The isolation from Denmark during the war helped to bring about the establishment of Home Rule over the 540 square miles of the Faroes in 1948. Their separate language, which has affinities with Icelandic and West Norwegian, and their own local literature, art and sculpture make the Faroes very much an independent country. Increasing prosperity from the fishing industry helps to make the Faroese self-supporting, but Denmark is responsible for certain aspects of the administration and pays for many of the islands' services. The Danish authority is vested in the Resident High Commissioner.

That first long journey from the airport to Tórshavn I shall never forget for its splendour. We piled into any taxis or buses available—the fares are shared. I was soon to find that the Faroese are a completely classless society with no very rich and no very poor, and, so far as I could see, no slums. We descended from the mist into a little town of wooden houses, every sort of shape and brightly painted. Then over

The harbour at Tórshavn, capital of the Faroes. Fishing boats retain the long, low look of Viking craft. The Lögting, or Parliament, which has twenty-nine members, meets in the building in the background


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steep hills to a ferry across a sound whose cliffs were higher than any I had seen before. It was mild and damp, and in the evening light across the calm water, there was Vestmanna with its many-coloured houses at the water's edge, its quay and taxis. Now began the still longer journey to the capital by tortuous climbs to the cliff tops and a descent to the charming village of Kvivik.

The Faroes are part of the Viking kingdom which in about AD 800 expanded from Norway and Denmark in its long-boats—westward to Iceland, Greenland and Newfoundland, and southward down the west coast of Scotland as far as the Isle of Man. To this day all the open boats in the Faroes have the long, narrow Viking look, and all but one of the towns are set right at the water's edge.

After making their first settlements, the people moved a short way inland in an attempt to cultivate the steep slopes down which torrents pour into the sea. On the slopes are the older houses, built on basalt foundations with walls of horizontal pine-logs—driftwood from Siberia, or pine from Norway, sent in exchange for wool. The houses are tarred black with white windows. Wooden roofs have green grass growing on them as high as a hayfield. Outside the houses fish, whale-meat and mutton hang to dry. Behind the houses are the long strips of field cultivation, often ploughed by hand. These are called the infields, and are protected by dry-

The village of Kvivik straggles along the shore of a Streymoy fjord. The first Viking settlements are marked by stone walls running inland from the sea. All the Faroese villages but one—Saksun—are at the Atlantic's edge, for harvesting the ocean is the main industry of the islands. Agriculture has been virtually abandoned with the growth of fisheries, though there is good grazing for sheep



stone walls from the outfields on the moors and mountains above, where thousands of long-legged, long-fleeced goat-like sheep graze.

Kvivik has things to show from Viking times to the latest brightly-coloured houses. Down the sound you can look across to two rocky islands of immense height called the Colt and the Horse, each with settlements on them, and beyond, the isle of Sandoy and perhaps on a clear day the distant isle of Suduroy, the southernmost limit and said to be the most Danish in character of the islands.

It is dark for only a few hours as far north as this in summer, but the light grows dim towards evening. In this half light we wound through brown fjords past more islands and peaks to the east of us. White moving ribbons of waterfall fell for hundreds of feet from hilltops lost in mist. It seemed impossible that there could be a town of 9,000 people at the end of such a wild journey.

The first thing which struck me about Tórshavn was the colour of its flower gardens and the unusual sight of trees, for one of the striking features of the Faroes is the almost total lack of trees and bushes. The festival of St. Olav's Day was in full swing, and a large number of the islands' 35,000 inhabitants had gathered in Tórshavn to dance and sing in the streets. There are no public bars in the Faroes, but whisky, gin, beer and schnapps are imported for private consumption. Many people were merry, but none aggressive or quarrelsome, even to a stranger not in native dress.

There were long queues to get into the hall where the dancing and folk-singing were taking place. Just as the ancient Greeks knew the tales of their gods and heroes from Homer, the modern Faroese have their history built into them from childhood in the form of sagas. The sagas are sung to medieval chain-dancing, one singer taking the lead and the rest joining in the chorus. In the square outside, dancing and singing continued until morning. Then there followed boat races in the harbour, while I walked in the old part of the town among the grass-roofed houses to the old Parliament House on its rocky promontory. The Faroese Parliament, the Lögting, is one of the three oldest parliaments in the world; the others are those of Iceland and the Isle of Man.

One of the beauty spots is the town of Kirkjuböur, south of Tórshavn. Among its numerous monuments are the ruins of the never-completed Magnus Cathedral, built from grey basalt in the thirteenth century. Alongside the cathedral is the parish church, a thousand years old, and the remains of yet a third church.

We visited a typical Faroese farm above the old cathedral. Inside there was a sequence of rooms which I came to know and love. A well-equipped electrical kitchen, and then a sitting-room with modern Danish furniture, light walls with paintings by talented Faroese artists, holy texts framed over the door, a family wooden bureau, solid and elegant, dating back to about 1800, a table with chairs round, and soon plates of home-made bread, meat, chicken, fish, jam and local cheese, and coffee or tea.

Out of the window from this farm we looked across at the most unforgettable view in the world—emerald water, green infields on the Colt and Horse and the grey terraces of these steep islands, and to the north, the vast cliffs of Vágar, where the airport is, and rocks fall 1,000 feet to the sea. The light changed every moment and the colours with it. Gold went pink and the far sea looked milky, pearly-coloured clouds hid peaks and then revealed them, and everywhere was the clear,

sparkling silence in which you could hear cows chewing, sheep grazing and the bark of a distant dog.

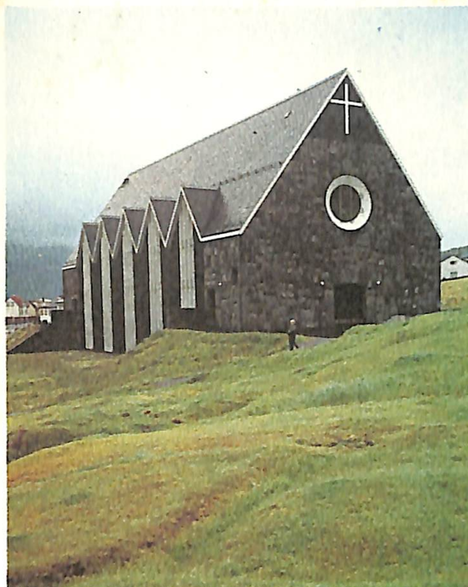
The Faroes consist of eighteen islands, seventeen of them inhabited, and each island I visited had a different and strong character. Sandoy is the gentlest, with fewer great cliffs but with sandy beaches—though even in summer it is never warm enough for sea-bathing—wooden houses and churches, some of them very old, and a frequent ferry service to Tórshavn. Eysturoy has lakes, mountains and tremendous cliffs to the north which fall sheer for 2,000 feet, waterfalls, wooden churches, old manor-houses and many villages bordering the fjords. Bordoy has the second biggest town on the islands, Klaksvik, which is the centre for the all-important fishing industry. At a restaurant here we had delicate whale steak, like the best beef.

The Lutheran churches are almost all of wood, the older ones black outside with white windows, sliding shutters and roofs of long grass, and with little bell-turrets of wood set cornerwise over the west end. Into these boys climb on a Sunday from the west gallery in the church by a ladder and ring the bell for service. In some of the church galleries fishing nets are stored, and ropes for cliff-climbing to catch sea-birds. The use of the church as a store for keeping nets and ropes dry goes back to the days when the church was the chief and driest building in the village.

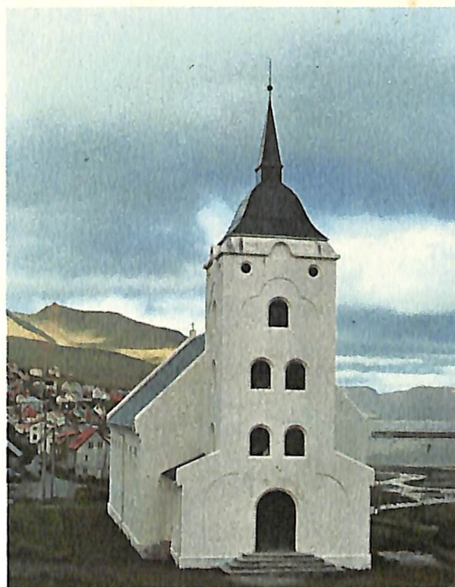
In plan, they are like medieval hamlet churches in England which have escaped Victorian restoration. They have square east ends and carved chancel-screens. The wealth of pale unpainted pine, the criss-crossing wooden beams of the open roof with stays here and there going down diagonally to the floor of the opposite wall, makes one realize that these holy little places were constructed by boat-builders to withstand Atlantic gales. Decorations usually consist of carved bench-ends with holes in their tops for candlesticks, glittering brass candelabra hanging down the centre of the nave, a carved chancel-screen like thick fretwork pierced with traditional patterns of the tree of life, hour-glasses and symbols of the Passion. In some the carved wood screens give an air of mystery and length to these little churches, and through them you see the curve of the communion rails, the old embroidered altar cloth, silver Communion plate and above it a painted altar-piece of the Crucifixion. And outside, green hills, grey rocks, rippling water and the sound of a tumbling stream. I was surprised to find that these churches were mostly built, or rather rebuilt, between 1829 and 1847. They obviously conform to a medieval pattern which has been reproduced through the centuries. Their square ends and screens have more affinity with East Anglian than Danish churches.

During a journey from Klaksvik to Tórshavn, we put in at the little village of Kaldbak on Streymoy, only approachable by water. It was a perfect Faroes evening—after the sea smell the strong scent of hay which was being hand-scythed on the infields and, mingled with this, the scent of clover, yellow irises and brilliant blue forget-me-nots; the stone quay, long open boats and the church-keeper waiting with the key to one of the best church interiors I saw in the islands. Then back in the quiet evening past the now familiar shapes of other islands to the warm, friendly welcome of the winding streets of Tórshavn.

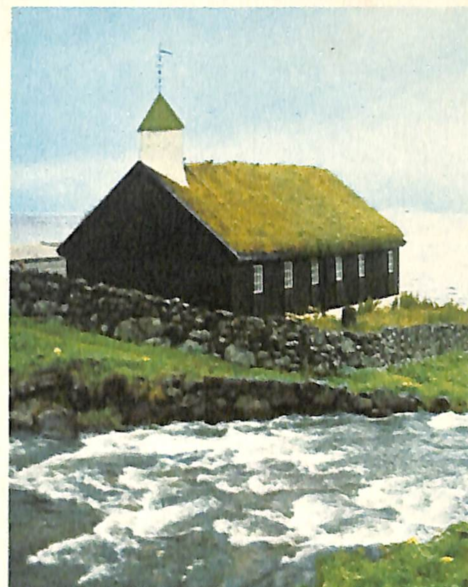
Inside the village church at Kollafjördur on Streymoy. It was built in 1837 but is medieval in plan, with high altar, carved chancel screen and open benches. Fishing nets and ropes are stored in some church galleries



This stone church at Klaksvik, Bordoy, second biggest town on the islands, was built by a Danish architect in 1963



Midvágur church, on Vágar, is another modern building, finished in 1952. The islanders are mostly Evangelical Lutheran



The church at Funningur, on Eysturoy, was built in 1847. It has a grass roof, black timber walls, white windows and a tiny bell turret

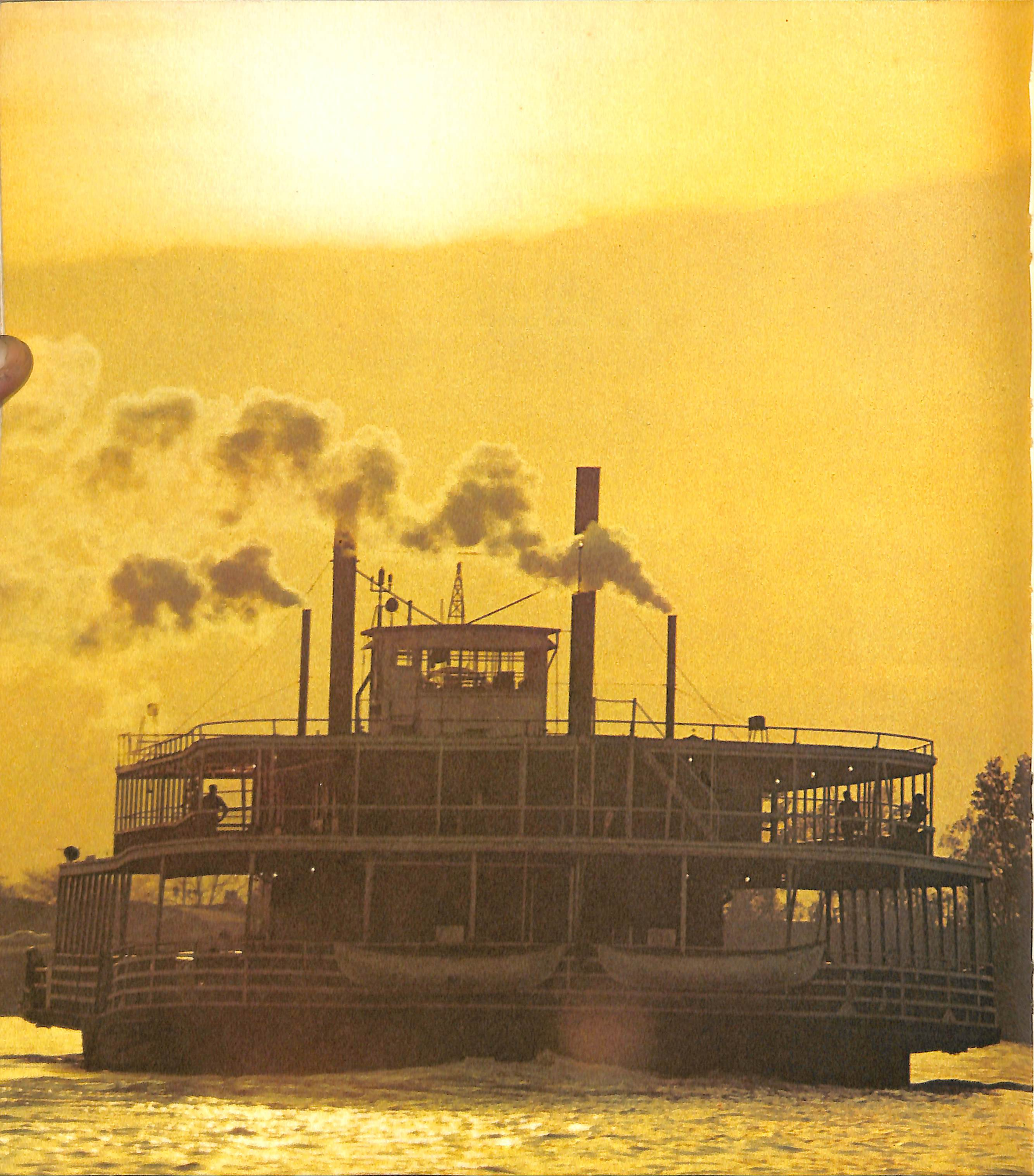
The brightly painted houses of Kollafjördur make a vivid pattern against the green slopes cradling the village. The cultivated infields in the background lead to the open pastures where sheep graze. The 35,000 inhabitants of the Faroes are direct descendants of the warlike Vikings. The children learn their history in the form of sagas—traditional stories of heroic achievement

The octagonal church at Haldorsvik, on Streymoy, was built in 1856. The village beyond is older. Driftwood from Siberia or pine imported from Norway were used to build the older houses. Fish, whale-meat and mutton are hung under the eaves to dry. The process can be slow, for rainfall is heavy, and clouds usually hide the sun





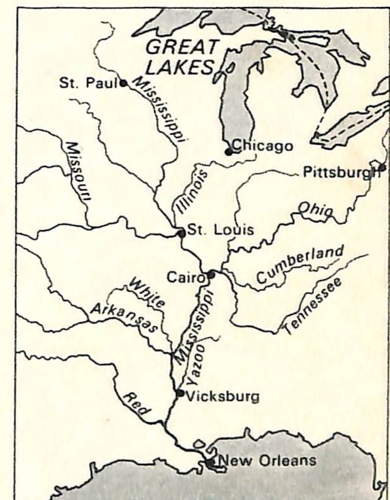
An old graveyard at Saksun, on Streymoy. It lies above a lake which runs through a deep gorge to the Atlantic. There are few trees in the Faroes, because of strong westerly winds and frequent gales, and no indigenous land mammals—rats and mice came from visiting ships; but sea-birds thrive and puffins are caught for food



Mississippi towboat

The Mississippi and its tributaries drain half a continent, from the Rockies down to the Gulf of Mexico. Along this vast artery float strings of barges, generally laden with oil and pushed by sturdy towboats. And as in the days of Mark Twain, the captain still needs an unerring instinct for his lonely world of shifting sandbanks and yellow water

FERVENCY of race and religion has moulded the nature of the American South; but scarcely less pervasive has been the influence of the Mississippi, in many ways a secret and eccentric river. It is slow, sticky and yellow ('running liquid mud' is how Dickens described it); but also huge and overbearing, powerful in character, aged, laden with memories, sometimes sleepy and placid, sometimes menacing, always rolling and changing its course, full of strange currents and drifts, twisting and tortuous, unpredictable, remote yet always familiar, awful but lovable; like some tough old wayward warrior, sprawling across half a room with a glass of brandy in his hand.



A score of great rivers contributes to the Mississippi–the Illinois and the Tennessee, the Yazoo, the Arkansas and the North Platte, the Cumberland, the Allegheny and the White River–and their combined water, carrying countless tons of mud, sweeps down the valley to join the Gulf of Mexico near a humid, swampy, mosquito-ridden, desolate Louisiana village called Venice. The lower river lays its own bed, and is constantly changing its course, finding shorter or easier routes to follow, building up bars, banks and islands, now overrunning its shores with terrible floods, now shifting its way and leaving some perfectly respectable old river town high and dry, like an impoverished dowager.

So the places along the banks of the lower Mississippi, where the waywardness of the river is most dangerous, crouch warily beneath high levees. People have been building these protective walls since the Mississippi valley was first settled. Sometimes, if you drive along the edge of the river, you will see a rotting, crumbling bank of soil, covered in grass, decidedly archaeological in character, built by the French pioneers in the 1700s. But everywhere there are modern levees too, stout and well-constructed, with a dirt track running along the top of them.

You can taste the arid, fascinating flavour of the Mississippi valley by driving along these tracks in the heat of a summer morning. Below you on one side of the levee there is likely to be a tumbled mass of foliage, and beyond it, through the trees, you may catch a glimpse of the wide river. On the other side is the immense flat

A Mississippi steamboat. The first steamboat on the river left Pittsburgh for New Orleans in 1811, and the steamboat era was at its height when Mark Twain became a river pilot in 1857

cotton country stretching away into the distance where the colours blur. There in interminable mathematical rows stand the cotton plants, and sometimes you may see negroes working in the fields, men and women, with big hats and bright clothes. Here and there, in ordered patterns, are the little shacks they live in, and sometimes away in the distance, surrounded by groves of trees, is the comfortable old house of a plantation owner. The chequer-board of the land is dotted with clouds of dust, marking the passage of a car along unpaved roads. Sometimes the levee track will take you past a river town, with some white frame houses, a dusty main street, and a church or two.

There will be a general store (perhaps run by a cotton company) thronged with negroes, all smiles and gaudy colours; and an old ships' outfitters, built to supply the Mississippi packets, open-fronted, crammed with pans and stoves and hammers, with an old white man smoking his pipe on its broad steps, and a couple of negro children playing hide and seek around its counters. The scenery varies little from southern Missouri, in the north, to Louisiana in the south; but the binding factor, the thing that makes this country rich, and brought it into being, and causes the little towns to squat so cautiously behind their levees, is the presence of the river, at once life-giving and destructive.



The Ojibway Indians called it the *missi sipi* or 'great river'. It starts as a clear, narrow stream in the lake region of northern Minnesota. Fed by over 250 tributaries, it eventually stretches about a mile from shore to shore and digs a bed deeper than a hundred feet in many places

Almost everywhere on its lower reaches the Mississippi is lined with a narrow wilderness. There are thick trees, with their roots in the water, and tall grasses, jumping insects, the cries of improbable birds, an occasional deer, mosquitoes, brambles, and sometimes a turtle sunning itself on the mud. It is a lonely little jungle, but if you manage to push your way through it, and emerge on the bank of the river itself, you are unlikely to preserve your solitude for long. Before an hour is past you will almost certainly hear the distant pounding of engines, and see the long line of a Mississippi tow creeping downstream. The river has become a tremendous artery, and there is a ceaseless flow of traffic on it, winter and summer.

Few Americans know how important the Mississippi is to them, for they have been brought up to believe that river traffic was killed by roads and railways, and they think of the Mississippi instinctively in nostalgic terms of stern-wheelers, gamblers, ornate steamboat captains, Huckleberry Finns and log rafts. It is true that passenger traffic is all but dead, despite many brave attempts to revive it, and there are probably fewer craft on the river than there were in the brassy days—in 1849 there were more than 1,000 packet boats on the Mississippi—but the tonnage carried is immeasurably greater than ever before. There are a few stern-wheelers on the river still, things of dignity, with black funnels belching smoke, and white upperworks, and great paddles churning up the muddy water; but most Mississippi boats are now steam or diesel screw-driven craft, and they push (rather than pull) enormous loads of modern barges anywhere from Pittsburgh to Texas.

These are the boats you will see go by from your vantage-point among the brambles. They are powerful and well-tended, generally spruce, with company crests emblazoned proudly on their funnels, and radar screens and wireless masts on their superstructures. Sometimes they push a miscellaneous collection of barges, lashed together shapelessly, piled high with coal or yellow sulphur; sometimes a line of 'integrated' barges, made to fit each other, and generally containing oil. Occasionally you may see a triple-decker barge carrying cars downstream from Detroit.



The steamboat *Delta Queen* cruising on the Mississippi. About thirty miles before the Mississippi meets the Ohio River it enters a fertile alluvial plain through which it wanders in a series of broad loops and horseshoe bends

Because I wanted to learn more about these boats, pounding by so head-in-air, I stood alone one hot summer southern evening at a landing-stage on the banks of the Mississippi. I had arranged a passage on the towboat *White Gold,* and the landing-stage had been arranged as a rendezvous, where a motor-boat from the tow would pick me up. The stage was on a subsidiary channel of the Mississippi, and in the distance I could see the occasional light of a craft on the river proper. Behind me, on a bluff, the town of Vicksburg was all asleep, and usually there were only the noises of shunting trains and mosquitoes. Once a tug came close past me on the channel, its engines thudding; there were a few dim lights on its bridge, and a couple of shadowy figures, and I could hear muffled and desultory voices. Presently, away over the bluffs, I saw the repeated flash of a searchlight, and heard the distant beat of diesels, and soon my motor-boat arrived out of the darkness, with a cloud of spray. Two jolly deckhands heaved my luggage aboard, there was a roar of motors, and we were away, scudding down to the river.

The Mississippi at night is the very quintessence of blackness. The tangled jungle banks are all black, and so is the water, and only occasionally could we see looming past the motor-boat a floating trunk or a mass of jumbled branches. We kept our eyes on the flashing searchlight, though, and soon made out the long dark line of the barges. The *White Gold* was bound for Chicago from Louisiana, with a cargo of oil, and she had an integrated tow of five barges. As she approached, we swung around in a great arc to run alongside her. The motor-boat's engines were cut off, a hoist lifted us out of the water, and a moment later we stood on one of the barges, still sweeping through the water to the sound of slapping waves, with

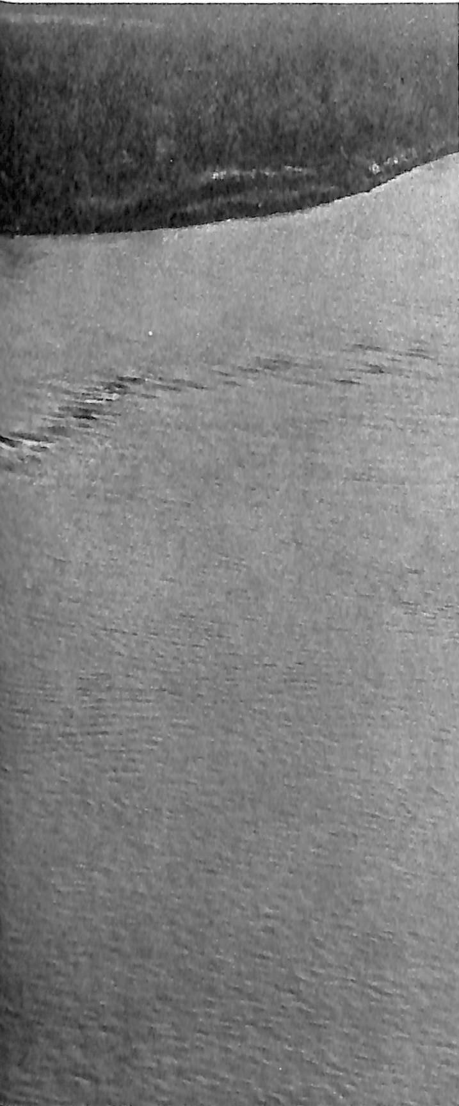


Women gathering lettuce plants *left* at Carlisle, Louisiana. The area drained by the Mississippi is one of the richest farming regions in the world, and for centuries the flood waters have brought fertile silt to the lower part of the valley. Louisiana grows vast quantities of cotton, sugar-cane, rice, soya beans, fruit and vegetables

Towboats on the Mississippi *right and below*. In the early nineteenth century keelboats and flatboats carried the river's commerce, until they were supplanted by paddle-wheel steamers. River traffic declined when the railways came, and only revived in the 1920s with the development of powerful tugboats which could push strings of barges more than 1,000 feet long







the lights of the towboat's pilot-house far astern. Such clandestine embarkations are often arranged, for crewmen who have to go ashore for emergencies, and join the tow again later on its voyage; or for the rare stranger who manages, despite the death of the passenger packets, to contrive a Mississippi passage.

There is (as I had suspected) a quality of supreme remoteness about life aboard a Mississippi towboat. Hour after hour, day after day, the silent banks slip by, with scarcely a sign of life on them, and you feel entirely separate from affairs behind the levees. Gradually the river encloses you, and when you pass a river town you examine it as you might a picture show, or a toy town, or something in a museum. There is something hypnotic about such an experience. From the glass windows of the pilot-house the yellow oozy water seems to stretch away endlessly. The sun is scorching and the sky cloudless, so that the decks of the barges shimmer, and the bare backs of the deckhands shine. Only rarely do you glimpse an old merchant town through a gap in the levee; a long hot main street, a few negroes lounging on the pavement, a mule and buggy kicking up the dust. Sometimes, down by the water, there is a crooked shanty boat, swarming with children, with a sun-tanned old philosopher idling his days away on its balcony. More often there is nothing at all but the merciless sun, the river, the dark and desolately wooded banks.

In the pilot-house, though, there is always an underlying sense of tension, for navigating a Mississippi boat is still one of the most exacting tasks in the world. The master and pilot of the *White Gold* was Captain Robert Shelton. He was a young man, characteristic of the modern breed of Mississippi pilots. The modern towboat does not have a wheel, but instead a light touch on a polished metal bar steers the tow; and there Shelton would sit, one hand on this lever, his feet on a ledge in front of him, talking easily of anything from Tennessee Williams to French politics, sipping coffee brought at very frequent intervals by a deckhand, but always with a keen eye on the river and its banks.

The Mississippi pilot still has to know more than any man has the right to know (as Mark Twain put it). Every foot of river and bank must be familiar to him, and he must recognize it in an instant. It is constantly altering, never looking the same twice, and he must notice any change instinctively, and summon at once the necessary reflexes. He must know the name of every light on the river bank, anywhere from New Orleans to Pittsburgh. He must know where to find slack water in the treacherous currents, where to sail in midstream and where to hug the banks, festooned with wild tree trunks. He must foresee a thousand and one perilous tricks of the river. He is utterly responsible for the towboat and its valuable cargo, night and day, often half a continent and several weeks from home.

The good pilot is handsomely paid, and he is never unemployed; if he leaves one company, within a day or two there will be others bidding for his services. The days of the old gaudy steamboat pilots are over, and Shelton (whose grandfather was one of them) sometimes regrets those times of silk hats, diamond pins, embroidered waistcoats and kid gloves; but the Mississippi pilot is a man of stature still.

Sometimes the towboat captain gives a hand to a friend in trouble. Very early one morning, as we moved upstream, we overtook a big steamboat struggling with a heavy load. It was a difficult bend in the river, where the current ran especially strongly, and the towboat was making slow progress. Shelton recognized it at once, and knew its pilot, and very gingerly we approached to help. The *White*

Gold's barges were 800 feet long, the other towboat's more than 1,000; and these two huge strings of barges, each as long as an Atlantic liner, had to be joined in midstream, without pausing, in a place wracked by eddies and cross-currents, so that the towboats could combine their energies.

When I climbed up to the pilot-house (bleary-eyed and unshaven, for it was only just dawn) I found it charged with excitement. The steersman, a sort of apprentice pilot, stood tensely in a corner. Shelton was cool and poised at his twin tillers. Far down on the barges two deckhands waited with hawsers. From the portholes of the other boat a few sleepy heads emerged, one of them in curlers, for many Mississippi boats carry women cooks, laundresses and stewardesses. Slowly, slowly, the tows approached each other, and the two pilots exchanged glances through their windows, and the porthole heads craned a little farther, and the deckhands gathered their ropes for the throw; until with a scarcely perceptible bump the barges touched, the hawsers were cast, and the two tows became one. Shelton handed the tillers to his steersman, and the rest of us sauntered across to the other tow for a gossip and a taste of someone else's coffee.



A hut in the marshy bayou area near Natchez. In its southern reaches the Mississippi winds through lakes and mosquito-ridden swamps, losing itself in a maze of slow-moving cross-channels called bayous, where the life of the people has changed little for over a century

Sometimes during the voyage Shelton passed the tillers to me. It is a disconcerting experience to handle a Mississippi tow for the first time. The atmosphere of the pilot-house is at once placid and nerve-racking, for it has the silence of an operating theatre, broken only by the quiet click-click of the tillers, and a few murmured remarks from any off-duty deckhand who has chosen to come and sit on the high leather bench at the back. You are instructed to keep the head of the tow on such-and-such a sandbank, or such-and-such a tree; but soon, in the hot haze of the river, one bank merges with another, and the shape of the tree changes, and the horizon becomes blurred and featureless. When you touch your tillers gently, you find that the whole immense tow swings suddenly and alarmingly, so that for a moment you are afraid the barges will be swept broadside on to the current, and carried away helplessly in the opposite direction.

'Keep her well inshore,' says the pilot indulgently, and if you are timid about it he will tell you again, and again, and again, until the barges are barely escaping the roots of trees, and the gloomy foliage is brushing the upperworks of the towboat.

The Mississippi pilot pursues his profession with great *élan.* The emergencies are generally slow—a gradual swinging with the current, so that the leading barge hits the pillar of a bridge, or an inch-by-inch movement towards collision; but the dangers are very real. Sometimes, indeed, the perils are less leisurely; in flood time a tow may have to be manoeuvred downstream, through all the intricate, shifting, treacherous difficulties of the river, at fifteen or twenty miles an hour.

For the deckhands, life on a towboat seems invitingly tranquil. During the long days on the river there is little to do, and they spend much of their time keeping the boat spick and span, painting its upperworks and polishing its brass. Time and again they saunter back to the galley for a cup of the coffee that is constantly on the boil. Or, leaning against the stern rail in the sunshine, they watch the frothy churning of the screw—they call it the 'wheel', so strong is the Mississippi tradition—and swap mildly vulgar anecdotes. They need have no worry about currents and shore-lights. Some of them have no idea where they are, measuring their progress only in terms of days out of port. There are unpredictable handicaps, of course—not long ago sixteen men were drowned when a towboat hit an Ohio bridge, and one of

the *White Gold's* barges has a buckled front because of an oil explosion; but in general the deckhand lives an easy life, enjoyably.

His quarters, if the towboat is modern, are excellent, with comfortable bunks and shower-baths, and his food is comparable with that in one of the less penurious London clubs. On the *White Gold*, master, mate, chief engineer and all sat together at a high counter and were served by a Philippino cook with a dry sense of humour; and the choice of the dishes was enviable.

Memories of the grand old days of the river colour the thoughts of the modern Mississippi boatman, giving him an air of rooted traditionalism far more pervasive than you will find among his colleagues on the Rhine. He lives in a silent, self-sufficient, introspective world, and as the months and years go by, and the tangled banks float past, so slowly he merges his identity with the Mississippi's water.

Having seen a little of this process for myself, I left my towboat one evening at dusk, and the motor-boat dropped me at a disused landing-stage in Arkansas, near a bridge and a lonely highway. I said good-bye to my friends, shouldered my baggage, and set off up a dusty track over the levee. At the top of the embankment I looked back. There was the tow still streaming by, her engines beating, her searchlight flickering and flashing and feeling the banks, like a restless finger; as if she could no more stop, or pause in her progress, than the river currents themselves, swirling under the piers of the bridge.



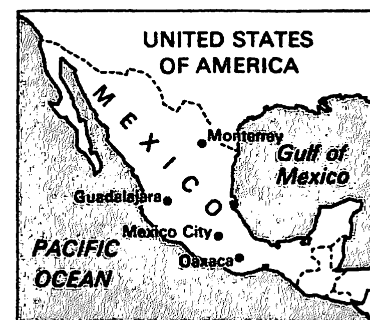
Linden, a late-eighteenth-century plantation house at Natchez. In the lower Mississippi valley the planters of cotton and sugar-cane amassed enormous fortunes and built their homes to be the centres of self-supporting communities. Natchez is a centre of pre-Civil War culture, and during the Pilgrimage, a festival held every March, hostesses in the costumes of 1860 welcome visitors to the stately mansions



GRAHAM HUTTON

Market day in Mexico

Mexico is a country of booming modern cities, of international pleasure resorts, of vast stone pyramids where the Aztecs sacrificed thousands of human victims to their gods. But it has its less spectacular side, in the small country towns and villages where the Indians still buy and sell, and sit patiently, as they have for centuries



ACROSS THE SQUARE of the little Mexican town comes carefree laughter: the firework man bears his wickerwork contraptions to private celebration or public ceremony. Here is the towered castle, a fixed asset, the *pièce de résistance*. Here too is the little bull, the *torito,* made like a cage to be held by the hands and fitted over the back of intrepid human operators, generally youths, who dash about among the shrieking crowd while its fireworks blaze forth. With him goes his proud son, learning to be a firework king, bearing smaller constructions. Mexicans love fireworks as do the Chinese, and lose no chance of letting them off. Birthdays, weddings, even wakes, to say nothing of every religious and secular feastday or holiday, evoke fireworks; and as there are many such days, you get used to living in a spasmodic barrage. At night you see coloured stars and golden rain, or hear shrieks of delight, and you wonder: 'Who on earth is celebrating what now?'

On the other side of the little plaza is the bank. Shuffling his age-long trit-trot comes an old porter, a *cargador,* strap across his forehead, carrying a big wooden box from a lorry. Around stand soldiers, fully armed. The public isn't curious, but I am; so I go in the bank, only to see that each heavy box contains new pesos by thousands. Up and down go other *cargadores*—who all seem of the older generation —bearing unlikely burdens: entire double beds, delightfully termed *matrimónios;* cooking ranges; cockerels in cages; internal combustion engines; other apparatus of all kinds; adult-size coffins; sacks of grain or crates of drinks. I once saw a grand piano being thus transported in the centre of the city, while a youth alongside the elderly *cargador* delicately bore the ivory keyboard. I have often seen an entire living-room suite borne along by two porters, one carrying a vast sofa and the other two ample easy-chairs; and I have only wondered that no children were sitting in them, for the children seem to leap on and into everything transportable and cheerfully to be granted a free ride.

By the lazy time-passing bars and cafés—preferably in plazas, or under covered piazzas *(portales)*—come wandering minstrels: generally three or more playing guitars, cellos, rarely a wind instrument, but nearly always a contraption (on wheels

A street vendor at Xochimilco, near Mexico City. Her ancestors in the time of the Aztec emperors probably grew fruit and vegetables on one of the *chinampas,* or floating islands, in Lake Xochimilco or Lake Chalco



The market at Taxco, seventy miles south-west of Mexico City. Cortés established a silver-mining community at Taxco in 1529, and the town is still famed for its silverware. Apart from silver, Mexico is rich in gold, tin, lead and copper. The influence of Spain is still strong in the buildings of Taxco, whose steep narrow streets might be those of a Spanish provincial town

or trestles), with one or more manuals and pedals, as if a Hungarian zither had been crossed with a London street-piano. The sounds brought forth by this queer instrument resemble those we achieved as boys by inserting newspaper between hammers and strings of an upright piano, or those of a drunk harpist who can't afford to maintain his instrument. But under the shade of the *portales*—the finest are in Puebla and Oaxaca—the zeal of the players contrasts with their skill and your own laziness. Their childlike aim to please you, and you alone, induces an even more soporific sense of wellbeing and goodwill. The time is in joint, if the music is out of it. A very little cash and a very little Spanish on your part, and a lot of reciprocal smiling, go a long way.

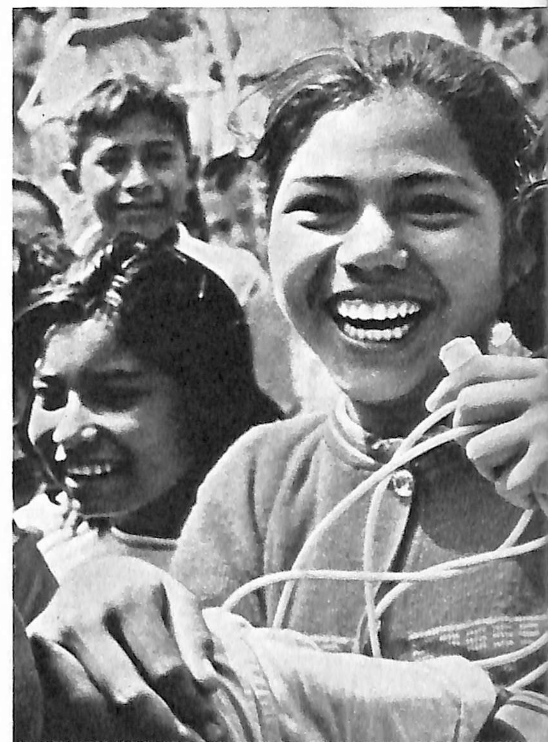
Nearly always a fat man—one of the few occasions on which you will find a really fat man in Mexico—plays this marimba-like contraption. Once, in Puebla, two men played it, one to each manual; so did I, making three to their delight, sharing one keyboard with the fat bass. But one of the few sad, or rather disappointing, things in Mexico is the absence of genuine, indigenous music, both in composition and execution. Here the old Indian music and instruments—except the drums—have virtually vanished. Only in very remote villages will you now hear any true Indian music: a reedy, fluty instrument, or a pipe, accompanying drums and a voice. All that is left now are the wondrously noisy brass bands, turned out on every excuse like the fireworks.

On the other hand, there is widespread love of what music there is. In one bar in Oaxaca, at four on a hot December afternoon, I ran into four decorously inebriated businessmen assembled at a piano. They were deliberating the precise melodic line of a rather 'folksy' aria then in vogue. One was fumbling for the treble line. The second was organizing a bass independent of the treble line, and (as far as I could tell) independent of its key. The two others, sitting by, were solemnly intoning separate arias, gravely correcting each other's (and the other couple's) evident dissonances by wagging admonitory index fingers in uncertain directions.

The love of blaring radios is evident everywhere. But so is the quiet underbreath singing at work—in fields, in the kitchen, in shops—and the schoolchildren's earnest trebles. There is little of the melodrama or melancholy of true Spanish music. Mexican folk-music today is cheerful, positive, trivial and cosmopolitan.

The true flavour of Mexican life can best be savoured in the country's typical institution and social centre: the urban or rural market. All the cities have, like those of continental Europe, daily markets where servants, housewives, and often their husbands and children do the marketing with grave concentration. In the remote countryside, the village or focal small town provides a market once or twice a week. Marketing in Mexico is a form of self-expression, not a chore. To the visitor it is a revelation of Mexican moods, manners and materials. You can spend hours or days meandering round the various sectors of the market devoted to the exhibition and sale of every conceivable kind of product, natural and man-made. Nor will you confine yourself to the alluring artifacts and craftsmanship, or the colourful fruits of the earth in their season. The buyers and sellers make the place. Their converse may only be of the eyes or by gestures, but their attitudes and relationships hypnotize you.

Nothing, no one, goes fast in Mexico—except motor vehicles—and marketing must be slow. Deliberation is every potential buyer's due. He will certainly not be



Mexican country children after their release from a day at school. Most of Mexico's estimated 43 million inhabitants are pure Indian or *mestizo*—of mixed Spanish-Indian blood. Despite 300 years of Spanish rule, the ancient strains of Mayas, Aztecs and Toltecs are still strong in the Mexicans' physique and lives

pestered, nor generally accosted; not even if he bends down and handles the innumerable kinds, colours and sizes of beans in their heaps on the hessian; those *frijoles* that turn up in so many tasty guises in so many Mexican dishes. Ripe fruit is not handled. Practically everything else is. Servants or housewives appraise dark shawls, multi-coloured and plain baskets, hats, sandals, textiles, buttons, ironmongery—Mexicans are marvellous smiths in iron, copper, pewter, lead, zinc, silver and gold—as well as fruit, flowers, vegetables, meat, fish, cheese, lard in bulk, but no milk or butter (these are luxuries found only in the big cities and then in special shops). Men buy their pants, jeans, jackets in markets, as women do their own and their children's apparel.

To my wife's amusement I was fitted with cowboy twill pants in Taxco market—which is on Sunday mornings, beneath the reverberating pink bell-towers of Santa Prisca—by a beautiful, discreet, and businesslike young lady, much practised in the art of averting splendid eyes at crucial moments, for the skin-tightness of many pairs proved too much for my underwear. She decorously draped hessian before me as the crowd went on its way before her stall. I got my pants, and very good ones too. Nobody stopped, looked, listened.

Every spot in a market has its rightful stallholder, and its peculiar smells and colours: an indescribable riot of colours and smells among flowers, piled and displayed with more than a touch of that antique flower-art, so dear to the Aztecs and other Mexican peoples. Here one is struck by the weirdness of tropical fishes, caricatures of fish; the curious sculptural beauty of Mexican vegetables and fruits—squashes and gourds of exotic colours and shapes; red, and gold and green peppers, okras, chillis, and huge tomatoes; all sorts of melons, peaches, nectarines, grapes, pears, apples, grapefruit and oranges. Many peculiar Mexican products show themselves: the strong, sharp, small green limes that are the ordinary *limón* of the



Drinkers at the only bar in Bosencheve, a village eighty miles north of Mexico City. Mexican beer is famous throughout the Americas, and the Mexicans have one of the highest consumptions per head of soft drinks in the world. For those who like something stronger, there is the highly alcoholic *pulque* and the more refined *tequila*, both made from the *maguey*, a sharp-pointed cactus

country (our big yellow lemon is called a 'royal lemon' and is rare); golden *nísperos,* wrongly given in many dictionaries as medlars, but more like our boyhood's 'cherry-apples' with many hard black pips at the core (they came from Spain where they are still poor children's fruits); bright squashy mangoes; cut pieces of sugar-cane, gnawed for sweetness and the pith spat away; smooth pawpaws *(papayas)* looking like crosses between marrows, melons and pumpkins, but slick and glutinous in consistency and sharp in taste; purplish, fuzzy-looking cactus fruits; cacao and coffee beans in bewildering variety; massive coconuts; messy dates; gay tamarinds; greeny-black *aguacates* which we miscall avocado or alligator pears; all kinds of fresh bananas, broad and short, yellow and pink, thin and long, divided roughly between the bigger plantains *(plátanos)* and the more delicate Canary bananas; pulpy figs and guavas; and the singular *zapotes*—not to be confused with the ever-ready, scavenging, soaring, black vultures overhead, *zopilotes*—a fruit looking like an avocado pear on the tree, but yielding when peeled a black, viscous 'fool' which, with the sharp tang of lime or orange, makes an oddly pleasant dessert.

There are precise pyramids of whole or shelled nuts and seeds in astonishing variety: many kinds of peanuts, sunflower and other seeds, almonds, locust beans, pecans, cashews, hazels—they are sold in handfuls for next to nothing—but there are not many olives, for despite all attempts through the centuries to domesticate them, the Mexican terrain (so like that of Spain) has proved surprisingly inhospitable. And always, on all sides, there are those trim little pieces of hessian on which are neatly piled little heaps of pulses, peppers, fruits, nuts, presided over by impassive (generally female) faces, like Buddhas draped in shawls. Mexican markets, like the people who throng or tend them, are comparatively quiet, slow-motion-like, serious places, having some flavour of temple as well as mart, of ritual as well as routine.



Waiting for the bus at Tlacolula, Oaxaca. Country transport in Mexico is not noted for its punctuality. Outside the big towns there are few cars, and the enormous buses, many fitted with 'cowcatchers' for removing unwanted animals to the side of the road, are an essential part of the life of the country. Since garages are few and far between, every bus driver is his own mechanic



Into Mongolia

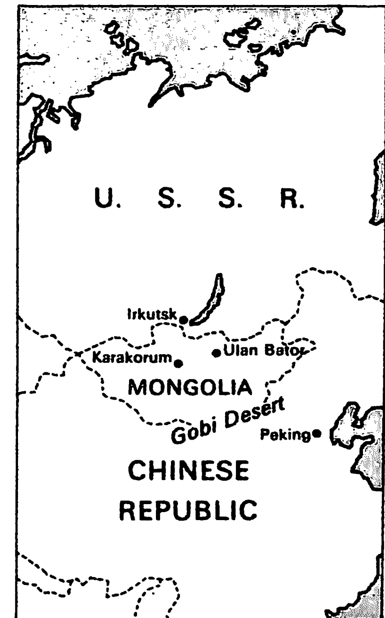
Mongolia is a country of rolling steppe and proud traditions, far from being a mere imitation of the two giants, Russia and China, who are her neighbours. Still a nation of horsemen, the Mongolians live much as their ancestors did when Genghis Khan and the Golden Horde swept across the medieval world

FOR MANY YEARS I had wanted to go to Outer Mongolia. There was so much about it that was fascinating. Its size, for one thing—a country as big as the whole of Western Europe with a population of just over a million people and twice as many horses as human beings. Its remoteness, too, was attractive. Set right in the centre of Asia, ringed round by towering mountains and impassable deserts, its capital, Ulan Bator, was 3,000 miles from Moscow, 1,000 miles from Peking, 2,000 miles from Delhi and 1,800 miles from the Arctic Ocean.

Once Mongolia was the jumping-off place for Genghis Khan's galloping hordes, and the heartland of an empire that stretched from Hungary to the Pacific and from the Arctic Circle to the Persian Gulf. Then for centuries it slumbered under a drowsy lama theocracy, until in the 1920s it once more became the scene of stirring events. Having fallen briefly into the clutches of Baron Ungern Sternberg, a pale, red-haired Baltic nobleman of strange tastes who had been beatified by the local Buddhists, it was in 1921 liberated at the gallop by Sukhe Bator, a young Mongol cavalry trooper with a secret despatch from Lenin hidden in the handle of his whip.

At the subsequent independence celebrations Sukhe Bator delighted the crowd by galloping at full tilt down the field, picking up silver dollars from the ground as he went. For a year or so Outer Mongolia was governed by a half Communist, half Buddhist regime jointly presided over by Sukhe Bator and the Living Buddha of Urga. Then, in 1923, Sukhe Bator died suddenly—poisoned, it was said, by the lamas. Shortly afterwards the Living Buddha also died suddenly. It was announced that there would be no further re-incarnations of Buddha in Outer Mongolia.

The Communist Party took over. Sukhe Bator was consigned to a handsome mausoleum on the local Red Square. The name of the capital was changed from Urga to Ulan Bator, or Red Hero. And, while officially retaining its independence, Outer Mongolia became the first Soviet satellite. Outer Mongolia could have disappeared from the face of the earth. Only in Moscow was it possible to glean



In the North Gobi, young boys of a collective farm wait for the start of a practice horse race—about eighteen miles across country. Horsemanship, wrestling and archery are Mongolia's 'three manly sports'

some hint of its existence. When I first arrived there in 1937, glancing through the official list of my diplomatic colleagues I came on the names of Dr Sambuu, Minister of Outer Mongolia, and his wife, Madame Sambuu. But, as in those days the existence of Outer Mongolia was officially recognised by no one except the Soviet Union, and as the Sambuus kept themselves very much to themselves, the most one could do was to look longingly at them at Kremlin receptions. Quite clearly any application from a British subject for an Outer Mongolian visa would not be entertained.

There was of course the off-chance that one might drift in across the frontier without a visa. Once, on an unauthorized expedition through Siberia to Russian Central Asia, I actually reached the foothills of the Altai Mountains and came within a couple of hundred miles of the Mongolian frontier, but there the weather broke, and, stranded miles from anywhere in a sea of mud, with no transport except a sort of wickerwork coracle on wheels pulled by an ancient carthorse, I decided to call it a day and push on to Samarkand.

A quarter of a century was to go by before another opportunity presented itself. Then, in the 1960s, suddenly Mongolia was in the news. (Outer Mongolia no longer, for in the interval Inner Mongolia had been eaten by the Chinese.) Mongolia had joined the United Nations. My former colleague Dr Sambuu had become President of the Republic. He had written a book entitled *Advice to Herdsmen* and was now working on a history of religion. In Mongolia there were yaks and wild horses and dinosaurs' eggs 90 million years old. In Mongolia, I read, as I watched the Argyllshire rain streaming down the window-pane, the sun shone for 300 days out of the 365.

My wife and I had no plans for Whitsun. Why not go to Mongolia? In a carefully worded letter to the Mongolian Ambassador in Moscow I explained my reasons for wishing to visit his country. Time passed and there was no answer. Then, with the suddenness that sometimes characterizes Communist regimes, a telegram arrived: 'Visa granted.' We packed and were off.

The first intimations that we were approaching Mongolia came in the airport restaurant at Irkutsk in Central Siberia. We had flown the 3,000 miles from Moscow between midnight and six in the morning without the June sun either going down or rising, and were feeling slightly disembodied. A breakfast of vodka, caviar, boeuf Stroganov, Russian tea, sour cream and apples had begun to make us feel a good deal better, when the door opened and in came a sensationally attractive Mongolian lady in an elegant little black dress that could only have come from Fifth Avenue. She was followed by three charming children. As we were wondering who or what she could possibly be, she introduced herself in faultless American as a member of the Mongolian delegation to the United Nations, now returning home on leave.

At this juncture our flight was called and we all walked out on to the tarmac to an elderly but on the whole serviceable-looking aircraft bearing Mongolian markings and the inscription 'Mongolair'. The pilot turned over his two engines a couple of times and we took off for Ulan Bator.

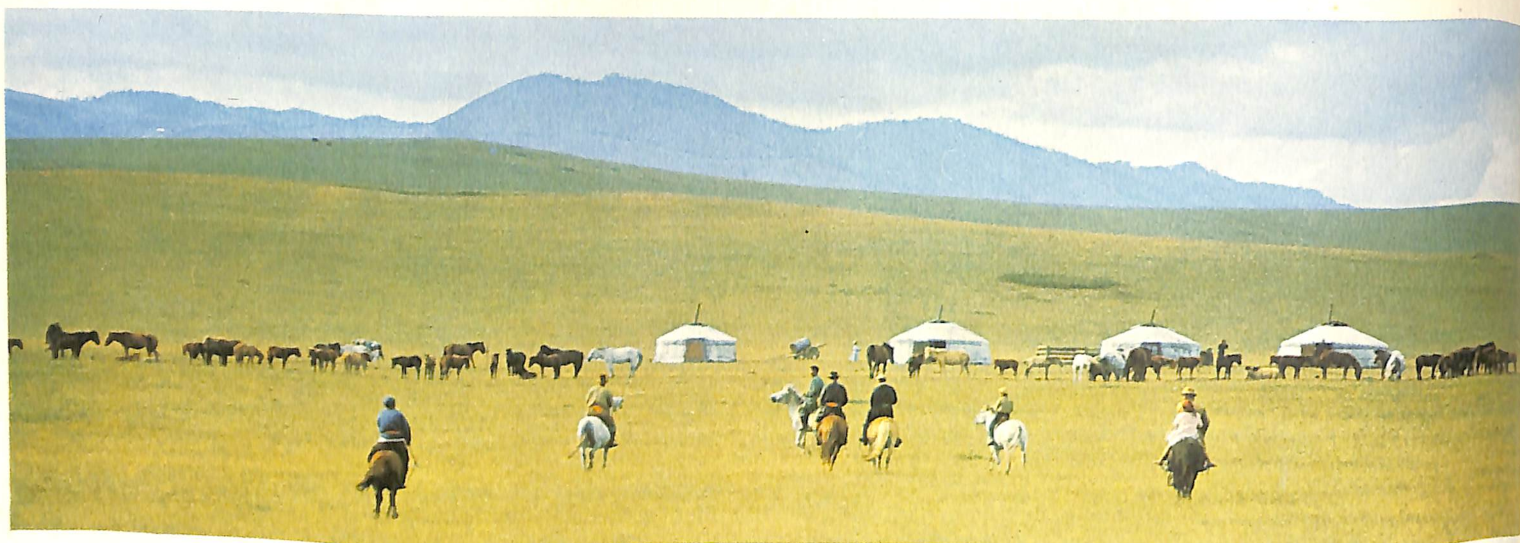
We were met at the airport by a shining black Soviet car. I had hopefully asked the Mongolian Ambassador in Moscow to book us into a hotel, which turned out to be a large, rather nice modern building with balconies overlooking a secluded



Most Mongols still live in *gers,* or *yurtas,* dome-shaped tents of white felt and canvas over a collapsible wooden framework. They take about an hour and a half to erect. A flap in the ceiling *above* provides light and air and an exit for the stove chimney. *Left* Tamdarja, camel herdsman on the Bolgan collective farm in the South Gobi, with his wife and daughter in their *ger*



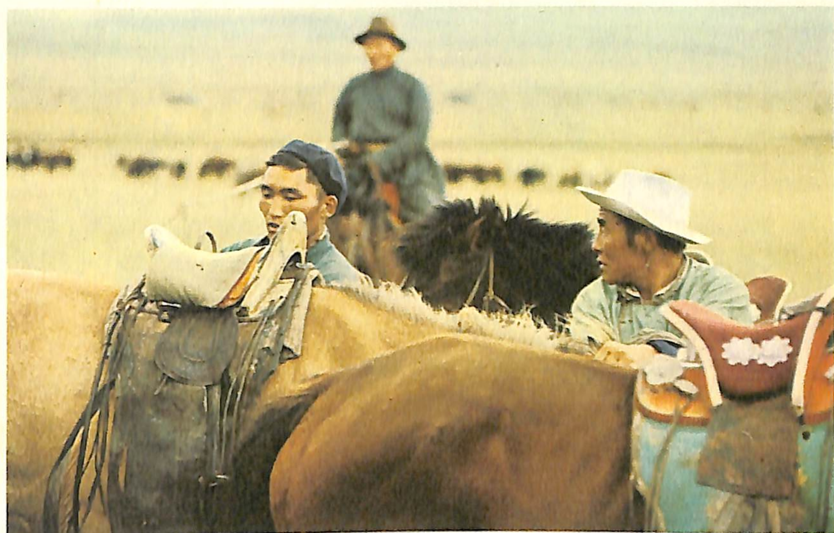
In the flat semi-desert of the South Gobi, the goats of the Tuya collective farm graze near the *gers* of their herdsman and his family



Mongolia's huge, empty landscape is the size of Western Europe, yet has only just over a million inhabitants. But they tend some 23 million animals—horses, sheep, cows, goats, camels, reindeer, yaks and hainags (a cross between a cow and a yak). Seven in every ten Mongols tend animals

On the Tuya collective farm in the South Gobi, a herdswoman milks a mare—one of a herd of 400 horses—while her husband holds the mare's foal close by to encourage milk yield. Mare's milk is fermented into *kumiss* or *airag*, the staple drink of Mongolia

Where horses rule a nation's life



Mongols tighten their saddles before rounding up some of the 2,000 wild horses on the enormous Baynchandamana collective farm. On Mongol horses Genghis Khan and the Golden Horde conquered Asia and Europe from Peking to the Danube

At Chujirt, a thermal spa and holiday centre, Mongol wrestlers perform their 'eagle' dance, before beginning the contest *below*. Wrestlers are highly honoured in Mongolia; the winner of a tournament gains the title 'Lion'





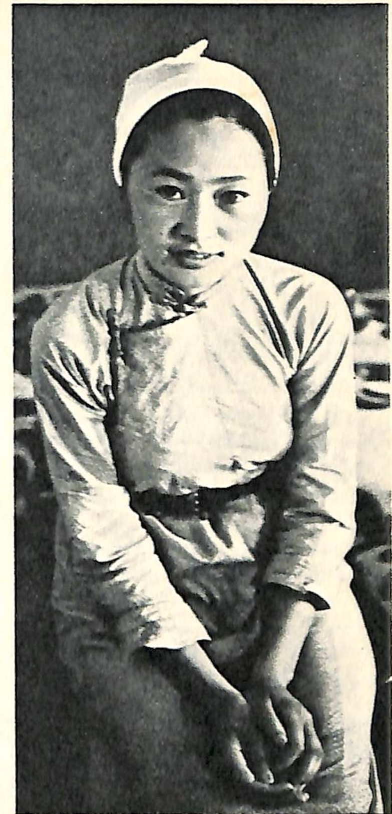
A Mongol woman of the South Gobi dances before foreign visitors. She and the accordion player work at a collective farm near by

valley in the hills above the town. It had been built by imported Chinese labour, and our luxurious suite of bedroom, bathroom and drawing-room was furnished with attractive Chinese silks and carpets and well-designed modern furniture.

No sooner had we settled in than we were summoned to the first of a long series of copious Soviet-style meals, interspersed with Mongolian specialities, including innumerable kinds of meat-balls and dumplings and washed down with Mongolian vodka, Crimean port and Armenian brandy.

There was no one else staying in the hotel. The long corridors echoed emptily. The bill, as I was later to discover to my dismay, came to the equivalent of about £35 a day.

Apart from a lama temple or two, Ulan Bator today is a completely modern town with a population of 250,000. Wide avenues of classical public buildings and substantial blocks of up-to-date flats are rapidly replacing the rather untidy groups of tents which still cluster on the outskirts. In addition to the usual imposing government buildings common to all Communist countries, and a massive mausoleum containing the bodies of Sukhe Bator and Choibalsan, the two heroes of the Revolution, Ulan Bator also boasts a well-stocked department store, an opera house, a university, an Academy of Science, a Grand Hotel (reputedly the best in the Communist world), a stadium and a large new hospital. A number of up-to-date factories, mostly geared to Mongolia's pastoral economy, include a meat-canning factory, a tannery, a boot-and-shoe factory, and a wool mill equipped with the latest British textile machinery.



Bizir is a young herdswoman on a North Gobi collective farm which has 180,000 animals. She wears a *del*, the Mongol costume worn by both sexes. In winter the *del* is lined with sheepskin against the cold

But we were determined not to spend all our time in the city. After some haggling, I managed to hire, for a mere £75, a Soviet-made jeep and a driver. With these we set out to view the remains of Genghis Khan's ancient capital of Karakorum, a couple of hundred miles away across the steppe. On his knee the driver carried an antiquated sporting gun, fully loaded, in readiness, he told us, to despatch such wolves as we might encounter. (He got only one shot and missed.)

In such an immense country a population of just over a million is thinly spread. On all sides a vast expanse of green rolling steppe stretches away to a distant horizon of hills. In a hundred miles you may encounter another truck. Or you may not. Probably you will just meet a shepherd with his sheep or a herd or two of horses or cattle. Or a little group of exotic-looking, high-cheekboned nomads on the march, with all their worldly belongings loaded on to a string of camels. But on all sides the steppe is alive with small furry animals, marmots, mice, jerboas, popping inquisitively in and out of their holes and scuttling back again—a tempting target for eagles and other birds of prey that hover overhead.

Here and there we came, as we drove, on a little cluster of *gers*, the traditional Mongolian round white tents of felt stretched over a collapsible wooden framework, in which the bulk of the population still live and which they carry with them on their camels when they move. It was in these that we paused on our way, to get out of the cold and into a warm Mongol family atmosphere and eat strange meals of tea and cheese and great bowls of *airag*—fermented mare's milk—in the centre of a circle of friendly, grinning, curious faces. Fermented mare's milk is delicious, effervescent and more than slightly intoxicating.

Strictly speaking, there are no proper roads in Mongolia—just a whole series of widely divergent tracks across the plain from which you select the most promising.

Further south, the steppe turns gradually into desert or *gobi*, a mixture, like most deserts, of patches of scrub, salt flats and sand dunes and great stretches of nothing in particular, turned into a wilderness 700 years ago, or so they say, by the trampling of Genghis Khan's myriad cavalry.

After stopping repeatedly on the way, to film the great herds of wild horses that drift about the steppe, and then getting hopelessly lost in the darkness among the innumerable divergent tracks, we did not complete the first stage of our journey until five the following morning—only to find, to our amazement, that, after crossing 200 miles of steppe, we were staying in yet another luxury suite with sitting-room and bathroom attached and a Chinese toothbrush and tube of toothpaste laid out for each of us in case we had left ours at home. After a few hours' sleep, we set out again for Karakorum.

On the way we stopped off at a *negdel* or collective farm, where we saw more horses than ever and witnessed a fantastic display of rough-riding. The Mongols have remained a nation of horsemen. It was they, they claim, who invented the saddle, who practically invented riding. In fact, it was in Mongolia that the first horse made its appearance. To this day, each Mongolian man, woman and child is ready to jump on to a horse and gallop off, and they expect visitors to be able to do the same. The Mongols love horses. Racing, after wrestling, is their most popular pastime, the horses entered being ridden over a twenty-mile course by



An elderly lama walks outside the sixteenth-century walls of Erdeni Dzuu Monastery with its white-washed stupas, near the site of vanished Karakorum, the medieval Mongol capital. Formerly, 1,000 lamas lived in *gers* within the half-mile-square walls of this pilgrimage centre. In Communist Mongolia, only two or three lamas now live here —as caretakers

children of both sexes aged between six and ten. The national emblem is a horseman galloping into the rising sun.

The equestrian proficiency of the Mongols has been a decisive influence in Mongolian history. With his hordes of Huns on their sturdy little ponies Attila, the Scourge of God, emerging from innermost Asia in the fifth century, threatened the frontiers of the Roman Empire, while at the same time other Hun tribes, turning eastwards, invaded China. It was his skill as a cavalry commander and the mobility and endurance of his troops that, eight centuries later, made Genghis Khan the most formidable military phenomenon of his age and enabled him and his immediate successors to become in a very short time masters of three-quarters of the known world.

But not for long. Little more than a century later the Chinese drove back the Mongols, and, turning the tables on them, utterly destroyed their capital of Karakorum. Today, as we found when we finally got there, nothing remains but a solitary stone tortoise, on to which every now and then a passer-by drops a pebble or two out of a vague deference to its presumed holiness. Having added our pebbles to the pile, we went on our way. Of the once great city with its domes not one stone stands upon another. They were taken, it is said, in the sixteenth century to build the neighbouring lamaist monastery of Erdeni Dzuu, now in its turn falling into decay, with a solitary lama in attendance in the grass-grown courts.

For 600 years after the fall of Karakorum, nothing much was heard of the Mongols. Through the centuries the lamas managed to keep Mongolia in a state of medieval stagnation, while the population dwindled to a few hundred thousand. Today, more than forty years after the Revolution, things are moving.

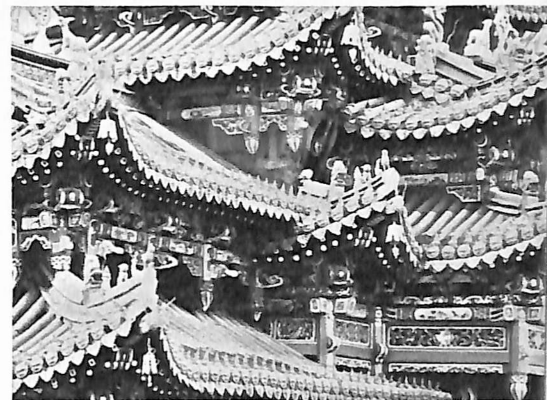
The power of the lamas has long since been broken. Now only two or three monasteries remain open, and there are not more than two or three hundred lamas all told.

Through a haze of incense at the Gandang Monastery in Ulan Bator, once the seat of the Living Buddha, we watched the lamas at their devotions, heard them intone their chants, blow their trumpets, clash their cymbals and beat their drums, while outside in the courtyard the faithful prostrated themselves endlessly on their prayerboards. After the service we took tea in an immense ceremonial tent with the scarlet-robed Abbot, an affable old gentleman. But aside from this we were to detect but few signs of life from a once all-powerful church.

On the other hand, Communism and collectivization have altered the life of the average Mongolian *arat* or herdsman less than one might think. Stock-breeding and livestock rearing remain the basis of the national economy. The Mongol is still basically a nomad. His home remains his circular *ger*. It is here that he and his family are born, live and die. It is here, too, that the traveller, wherever he comes from, will find a friendly welcome and lavish hospitality.

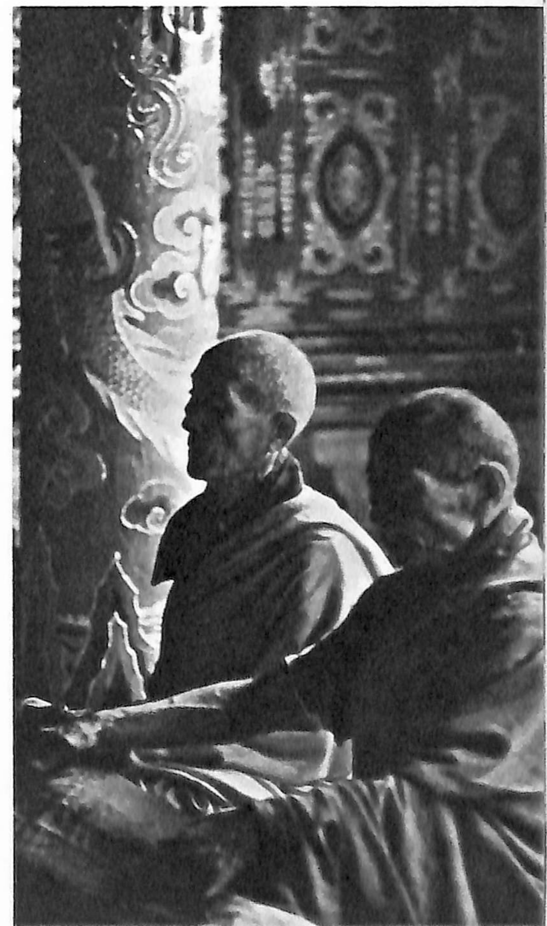
What may in the long run have more effect on Mongolian life is the introduction of arable farming. For centuries the Mongols refrained on religious grounds from disturbing the soil and its spirits, and as recently as 1929 only 8,000 acres were under cultivation in the whole country. Now a vast ploughing-up programme has enabled Mongolia to supply her own wheat and to export some as well.

Mongolia strikes one today as a prosperous-enough country. People on the whole are well-fed and well-dressed, cars are still scarce but motor-cycles and



The green, red and gold roof of a temple gate in Ulan Bator, the capital of Mongolia. The gate stands in the grounds of the Palace of the Living Buddha, who was Mongolia's equivalent of the Dalai Lama; it was built in 1912 and paid for by peasants

In Ulan Bator's Gandang Monastery two of the hundred lamas meditate



bicycles are beginning to make their appearance, and there is always a horse for everyone. In the shops in Ulan Bator there are plenty of consumer goods imported from Russia or China or from the other Communist countries.

Politically, Mongolia has much in common with any other Communist state. 'What,' the Mongols asked me after a tour of elaborately-insulated polling-booths on election day, 'do you think of our elections?' 'Admirable,' I replied, 'except that you have only one party.'

And yet it would be a mistake to assume that Mongolia is no more than an outlying province of the Soviet Empire. The Mongolian People's Republic, strategically poised between Russia and China, gives in many ways a greater impression of independence than do some Communist countries in Eastern Europe.

One reason for this, I suspect, is that the Mongols are so intensely proud of everything Mongolian. For men and women alike the brightly coloured traditional Mongol robe, or *del*, which is both practical and ornamental, still predominates over European dress. On every occasion brimming silver bowls of *airag* are handed round in preference to Crimean port or Caucasian champagne. And, when summer comes, even the occupants of the most luxurious apartments in Ulan Bator pack their *gers* into a truck or on to a camel and take to the hills or plains, while the 'three manly sports', horsemanship, wrestling and archery, still hold the same place in Mongol life as in the days of Genghis Khan and Tamerlane.

Wrestling, in particular, is tremendously important. The day we arrived the stands all round the great arena were packed with an immense, noisy crowd. The sun shone. Bright blue and vermilion banners flapped in the wind. Everyone in the crowd knew every hold and throw and even the little children could be seen practising them on the side-lines, all aspiring in due course to the titles of Lion, Elephant or Eagle, awarded to the national champion.



The centre of Ulan Bator is the huge traffic-free Sukhe Bator Square, named after Mongolia's most famous revolutionary hero. On the far left is the Chinese-built hotel which houses the British Ambassador; the porticoed building is the Opera House; and on its right is the Ministry of Foreign Affairs. On the site of the square less than sixty years ago stood forty stone 'coffins' in which criminals were imprisoned, and where they sometimes died

As one pair of contestants after another flapped out on to the field in their traditional 'eagle' dance and then went into a series of steadily maintained clinches interspersed by sudden bouts of violent action, excitement gradually rose, and even the ceremonially dressed heralds or seconds, who circle round holding the wrestlers' hats, joined in with encouraging slaps and cries. Then, when after much straining and manoeuvring, one or other contestant had lost his balance and been thrown, the winner, flapping his arms like an eagle's wings, went into his victory dance; the crowd yelled with excitement; and the next round started.

Out in the middle of the field, completely absorbed with my task of filming, I found myself again and again about to become mixed up in one or other of the contests. Meanwhile in tents and booths all round the ground, *airag* flowed freely as the finer points of each match were discussed by everyone from the Prime Minister down.

Watching this, or watching the mares being milked or a string of camels moving across the plain, or seeing a couple of herdsmen single out a horse from the herd, hunt it at full gallop in and out of several hundred stampeding mares and stallions, lasso it, bring it down, saddle it, mount it, and, after much bucking and kicking, ride it to a standstill, it was quite easy to forget all the new government offices and factories and apartment houses of Ulan Bator and feel transported to a heroic, a Homeric age.

It was basically this feeling, this impression, that we took away with us when we finally climbed on to the train that was to carry us for two days across the dreary expanse of the Gobi and on through Inner Mongolia to the Great Wall of China and Peking. The impression of a country and a people that had so far somehow managed to withstand the ugly onrush of twentieth-century civilization and to retain the natural dignity and charm of an older and simpler way of life.




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ANDRE VISSON

A garden by the sea

Portugal is a mixture of the old and the new, of sandy, mile-long beaches, lush green countryside, and a history that shows influences of Phoenicians and Greeks, Romans and Moors. And across the whole of this gentle land lies the heady scent of flowers

PORTUGAL was the birthplace of some of the world's greatest navigators—Gomes, da Gama, Magellan, who in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries discovered so many of the then unknown lands in Africa, Asia and America. It was not until after the first World War that those great explorers of modern times, European and American tourists, began to find their way into 'Europe's garden-on-the-sea' in any numbers.



The way you reach Lisbon—Portugal's capital and one of the world's most beautiful harbours—will determine your first impression of the country.

Coming by sea, you land in a colourful eighteenth-century city. The immense plaza fronting the harbour is bordered by government buildings, where ancient palaces used to stand. In the background, Lisbon's seven hills are dotted with palaces, churches and houses in a symphony of pastel shades—tender blue, pale ochre, pigeon mauve, honey yellow, carmine pink. It is such a perfect setting for an old-time opera that you are surprised to see modern motor traffic.

If you arrive by plane, you drop into a twentieth-century Portugal. Everything is modern, light and spacious: the comfortable airfield waiting rooms; the big buses that bring you to the centre of the town; the broad avenues with their attractive houses, colourful flower beds and fountains of sober elegance.

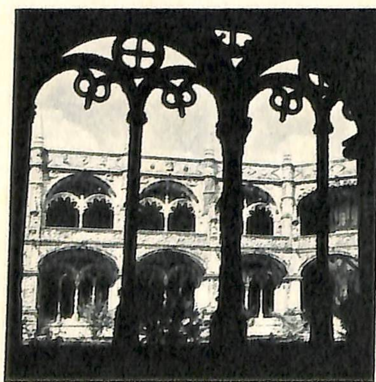
But when you cross from Spain into Portugal by car or train, you enter the really 'old country', you see the truly distinctive personality of the land. Though Spain and Portugal are closely related geographically and racially, their landscapes, villages, churches, people are vastly different. In Portugal everything is softer, milder, more relaxed. Above all, the countryside is a lush green.

For 'Europe's garden-on-the-sea' is not just poetic imagery. A large percentage of Portugal's 35,000 square miles is covered with verdure, the gift of the moisture-laden winds of the Atlantic, whose waters wash the 500-mile coastline. More than 2,700 varieties of trees, shrubs and flowers grow here. Those native to northern Europe flourish side by side with those from the Mediterranean countries and even from North Africa.

A quiet nap on a sandy beach at Nazaré. The painted boats and the men's traditional costumes are the outward signs of a small fishing community barely touched by the twentieth century



Portugal's oldest university, at Coimbra, was founded at the end of the thirteenth century. On graduation, usually in May, new and old graduates gather on the steps of the romanesque cathedral near by to sing traditional student hymns



Facing the Tagus river stands the fifteenth-century Jerónimos convent and church. It was founded to commemorate Vasco da Gama, whose supposed remains are interred there. The architecture reflects Portugal's maritime history

A national feature of the Portuguese is a pleasant Old World courtesy. In the shops every customer, however humble, is addressed *Vossa Excelência* (Your Excellency); and the ticket collector on the ferry crossing the Tagus bids you a gracious *boa viagem* (bon voyage) as he punches your ticket. Everyone is polite without being servile; everyone has a natural dignity without arrogance.

Whether in country or city, you are left in no doubt that Portugal is a man's world. On the roads the women carry all kinds of loads on their heads—baskets of vegetables, bundles of laundry, furniture, mattresses, even coffins—while the men ride on their donkeys or walk beside the women, hands in pockets.

Familiar figures in the streets of Lisbon are the *varinas*, the dark-eyed, dark-skinned fishwives, who get their name from the fishing village of Ovar, believed to have been founded thousands of years ago by the Phoenicians. Balancing the flat trays of silvery fish on their heads, they move gracefully among the crowds, oblivious of the women in Parisian dresses.

In the open-air cafés along Lisbon's Avenida da Liberdade, bordered by acacias, palms and profuse flowers, people take their leisure from early morning until late at night, sipping their black coffee and enjoying their brandies.

This is a land of superb old churches. The most striking—Tomar, Batalha, Alcobaça, Jerónimos—present an astounding array of columns twisted like nautical cables, of mammoth shells, giant anchors, globes encircled by coils of rope, and other extravagantly sculptured decorations running like tropical creepers along windows, portals and arches.

The red tile roofs curved like those of Chinese pagodas remind us that Portugal was the first Western nation to open trade with China. *Azulejos*—the polychrome glazed tiles decorating patios, reception rooms and often outside walls—are a legacy of several centuries of occupation by the Arabs. *Azulejos* were originally inspired by ancient Oriental rugs, whose elaborate designs and rich colours were skilfully reproduced on tile by Portuguese craftsmen. Later the deep blue-and-white of Chinese pottery was adopted. After six or seven centuries *azulejos* are still used in the decoration of Portuguese houses and public buildings.

At the entrance to every Portuguese town of any importance is a circular building—the bull ring. Unlike the Spaniards, the Portuguese do not kill their bulls; after the *toureiro* has proved his skill by piercing the hide of the bull with four pairs of festooned *bandarilhas*, the fight is over. As the harassed animal is generally unaware of this, cows are brought in to lure him out of the ring.

The oldest of Portugal's three universities—and one of the oldest in Europe—is in Coimbra, a picturesque pink-and-white town perched on a steep hill in the centre of Portugal. The students wear skimpy black frock coats and wide one-piece capes that fall in big folds, with bottoms unhemmed. Whenever a young man falls in love with a girl, he slashes the bottom of his cape with a penknife. By the time his years of study are finished, the cape is often completely tattered.

The proudest people in Portugal are the 300,000 inhabitants of Oporto, Portugal's second largest city, which lent its name to both the country and one of the most famous wines in the world. Oporto is Portugal's oldest city, believed to have been founded by Greek settlers in 2,000 BC. For centuries its people have been Portugal's money-makers. The ancient small kingdom surrounding the city of Oporto grew into the great colonial empire of Portugal.

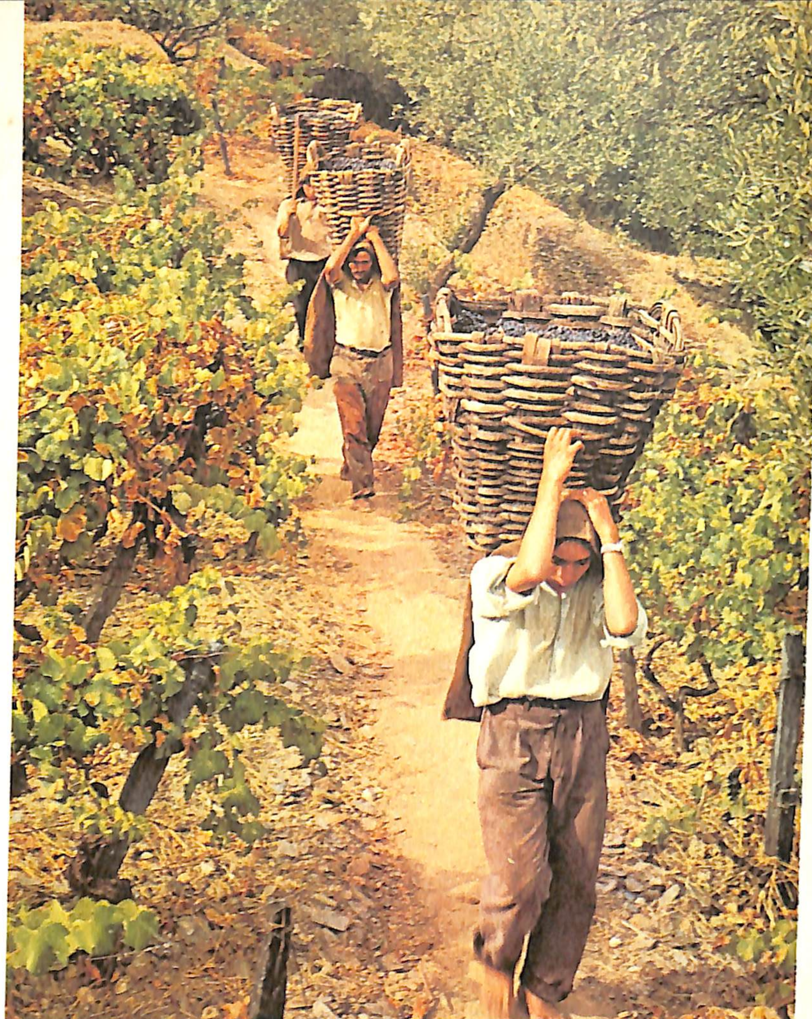
Sophisticated Lisbon boasts beautiful parks, spacious squares and broad avenues. Much of Lisbon's architectural splendour was destroyed in the earthquake of 1755. The picturesque old town, Alfama, escaped and today represents Roman and Moorish Lisbon, with medieval churches and palaces along its narrow alleys



Oporto, the capital of northern Portugal, is the trading centre for the famous port wine. Narrow streets rise in terraces; many of the white-painted houses are oriental in style, and often decorated with blue-and-white *azulejos*

In the vineyards, or *quintas,* of the Douro valley near Oporto, women *below* gather the grapes, which are carried *right* in baskets down to the wine-presses for treading. Barges (*rabelos*) take the wine down the Douro to the wine lodges in Vila Nova de Gaia to be shipped abroad





Oxen still transport all kinds of loads on Portugal's roads, work in the fields and even in the sea. In the ancient fishing village of Nazaré, when the picturesque boats—their slim prows and sterns raised like the cusps of a new moon and decorated with gaily coloured designs—return in the evening with the day's catch, the oxen pull the heavy boats out of the ocean on to the beach.

The return from fishing at Nazaré is a unique sight. The bare-footed fishermen and their sons are all dressed alike in woollen blouses of brown-green-yellow tartan, and trousers rolled to the knees—a garb worn here for generations. Their headgear is a woollen stocking cap, the end falling to the shoulder, in which they keep their tobacco and matches. The young women wear mostly woollen skirts and blouses of the same tartan as the men. The older ones wrap themselves in wide black capes that are attached to the head by a black felt hat, flat as a pancake. The capes fall to their bare feet, giving them the appearance of giant bats.

Old and young take an active part in drawing in the catch, weighing it, and carrying away the wet nets and hampers full of turbot, pollock, eels, mackerel, whitings and sardines—Portugal's staple food.

West of Lisbon, running for 20 miles, is the Costa do Sol—Portugal's Riviera. It is the most elegant and most visited region in the country. It has everything to attract the Portuguese and the foreigners: beaches, fishing villages, attractive villas clinging to the eucalyptus- and pine-clad hills, modern hotels, golf courses, casinos, night clubs, as well as the romantic mountain range of Sintra, with its luxuriant gardens. Many well-to-do Lisbonese have their summer homes here, or live here all the year round. It is a region of old Portuguese palaces without kings and of exiled kings without palaces.

A winding road along the shore leads to Cabo da Roca, Europe's most westerly point. The umbrella-shaped pine and eucalyptus trees, with their heady fragrance, give way to heather and strange low plants whose hard sulphur-yellow blooms resist the strong ocean winds. Then these, too, disappear. Nothing but bare, stony land. And on the left, between ocean and road, a sea of dunes.

You stop at one of the unpretentious eating places along this road. The dining-room is low and poorly lit, but the sole and the lobster are exceptionally tasty, the wine is light, cool and dry. With the strong, black Portuguese coffee the owner presses on you a juniper cordial—on the house. It is growing dark. A song arises above the noise of the wind outside. It is the Portuguese *fado*—fate, the burden of destiny. It vibrates with anguish and nostalgia. It is tender, sentimental and heartbreaking. The high-pitched lament of the guitar keeps up an insistent throbbing.

Another song follows—the *saudade*, a song of even greater nostalgia, a song of eternal regret. It was from here, centuries ago, that the caravels of bold navigators sailed to discover fabulous lands in the Americas and Asia. It was from here that many Portuguese emigrated to Brazil—a land once belonging to Portugal—or to their great colonies in Africa.

This sad word *saudade*, who invented it? It was a mother's farewell to her beloved son going away. It is only when you have left Portugal that you can really understand what it means.



While their menfolk sleep, bare-footed women of Nazaré carry the day's catch to market



Outside the cities the pace of life slows down. Cars speed by on modern motorways, but on quiet country roads donkey-drawn carts are more familiar sights

At Nazaré the male headgear is a stocking cap. There is great variety in regional costumes, seen to their greatest advantage at the numerous popular festivities or 'pilgrimages', mixtures of folklore and religious tradition

F. D. OMMANNEY

Eating out in Hong Kong

Britain's island foothold off the Chinese mainland is a cosmopolitan city where western-style skyscrapers loom over the thousands of sampans that crowd the waterways. In food as in everything else Hong Kong is a meeting-point of east and west, where the vast range of Chinese dishes tempts the diner into expensive restaurants or kerbside eating-houses



DURING a long history, punctuated by natural disasters, floods and famines, the Chinese have learnt that practically everything is edible if properly cooked. For this reason their cuisine is extraordinarily varied and frequently extremely exotic. The most famous delicacies, best known to Europeans, are birds'-nest soup and sharks'-fin soup. The first is made by boiling down the salivary excretion which binds together the mud nests of cave-dwelling martins on the coast of Borneo. This is imported into Hong Kong via Singapore in large quantities. The second is made from the cartilaginous rays of the fins and tails of dried sharks. With cream and other reinforcements it makes a soup of a gelatinous consistency, which has the same inexplicable satisfying quality as have oysters, quite independent of its not very emphatic flavour. There are many other dishes which are equally exotic, such as fledgling pigeons eaten whole, the skull and skeleton the consistency of jelly; tiny birds which are probably finches netted illegally in the New Territories; pangolins and puppy dogs, rats and snakes, and the innumerable strange fruits of the sea.

A Chinese meal always has a foundation of rice; and the basic equipment necessary is a bowl and a pair of chopsticks. This, one would imagine, is primarily the equipment of a people accustomed to eat out of doors, where they work. The ritual has, of course, become very elaborate indoors, though still built round this basic foundation. The bowl may be changed once or twice during the meal, but the chopsticks are used throughout.

Chopsticks are made of ivory or bone and are about nine inches long. (In Japan they use much shorter and lighter ones made of bamboo.) They are square in cross-section where the fingers grip them, but taper to blunt rounded ends. A poem in Chinese characters, or one's name, may be engraved on the rectangular part. The chopsticks are held by the thumb and the first three fingers of the right hand. One chopstick lies in the angle between the thumb and the forefinger, gripped between the tips of the second and third fingers. This is held stationary, while the other stick, held between the tips of the thumb and forefinger, is the

Specialities from every province of China are served in Hong Kong's restaurants. A dish from Peking, known as 'Steam-boat' or 'Genghis Khan', contains oysters, fish balls, vegetables and meat cooked in a rich sauce


HENNESSY



The fishing port of Aberdeen, named after Lord Aberdeen, Britain's Foreign Secretary in the 1840s, is the anchorage of two famous floating restaurants specializing in sea food. It is also the home of the 'water people', who live in junks and sampans tightly packed in the shelter of the mountains. Close by once stood the village of Heung Kong Wai—'walled city of the fragrant lagoon'—from which Hong Kong is named

mobile member of the pair. The two thus form a pair of pincers with one stationary and one mobile limb. Europeans find chopsticks difficult to use at first, but they are easy enough when you have become accustomed to them. They are admirable for the digestion since you cannot take up large mouthfuls. They are not intended for picking up small and recalcitrant objects like single peas; it is perfectly good manners to use for these the porcelain spoon, which is also part of the basic equipment.

A table set for a Chinese meal is a delightful sight. It stimulates the salivary juices merely to look at it. The table is nearly always round. At each place is a small porcelain bowl in a saucer with a china spoon of the shape which we use for medicinal purposes. Beside the bowl is a pair of chopsticks, nowadays, perhaps, wrapped in Cellophane. There are two or three little saucers containing oyster, soya-bean and tomato sauces and vinegar. There are usually paper napkins and, beside every other place, a spittoon on the floor for the men. There are also little jars of toothpicks beside every place.

Before the meal begins a tray of hot damp cloths is brought round, and comes round again at intervals during the meal. Long ago these used to be moistened with rose-water, but in these degenerate days the rose-water is replaced by a disinfectant.


TAI PAK
SEA FOOD

Each diner takes up a hot cloth with a pair of tongs, which comes round on the tray, and the men wipe their faces to remove the gleam of sweat, while the women dab delicately behind the ears for fear of spoiling their make-up. When the operation is complete the cloths are replaced on the tray and removed. There are no flowers or other decorations on the table because each dish, as it arrives, is set down in the middle of the table and the guests help themselves, or, more politely, help each other. It is correct and polite to help the lady on your right, pinching up pieces from the dish in the middle of the table with your chopsticks and placing them in her bowl. You must try to convey, when you are doing this, that you are picking out the choicest morsels for her. She must protestingly convey that you are indulging her beyond anything she is accustomed to. Whatever you give is far too much, and all she wants really is the merest fragment.



Plain rice is the staple food of the Cantonese people who form the majority of Hong Kong's population, and rice paddies occupy two-thirds of all the farm land in the colony. Sugar-cane, groundnuts and sweet potatoes are also grown, as are citrus fruits, guavas and lychees

When you have performed this little ceremony you are free to help yourself. You must always help yourself from the dish into your bowl, and it is very bad manners to go straight from the central dish to your mouth, as Europeans sometimes do. The bowl should be raised to chest level with the left hand, the thumb on the rim and the second and third fingers under the base of the bowl. When eating rice the bowl is raised to the mouth. The rim of the bowl is held against the lower lip and the rice is scooped into the mouth with a rotating motion of the chopsticks, difficult to achieve without showering rice all round. My place, after this difficult part of the repast, always looked as though I had been sitting in my own private snowstorm.

Chickens and ducks are often cooked after first being hammered into unrecognizable fragments. Great skill is required in discarding awkward pieces. In fact, many meat dishes seem to be prepared in the same way without regard to the anatomy of the beast. The fragments, if small enough, may be discarded on to the tip of the chopsticks with a far-away look in the eye and, if possible, without interrupting the conversation. A bowl for discarded fragments is usually provided, or may be called for in a restaurant. If the fragments are large this bowl may be lifted to the mouth, but this should be avoided if possible and should be accompanied by a still-farther-away look in the eye and even more remorseless conversation. Very often, however, poultry and fish come to table looking quite unmistakably, and sometimes rather disconcertingly, like a bird or a fish which has somehow been cooked in its sleep—the bird with its beak under its wing, the fish complete with head and eye, goggling fishily. When you touch them with your chopsticks they fall softly and delicately apart.

The meal usually begins with Chinese tea, jasmine-scented, in small cups or bowls. This is the time for conversation and anticipation, and it is not really correct to ruin one's palate with whisky or gin and tobacco. The dishes do not as a rule follow one another in quite the same sequence as at a European table. The meal may start with *deem-sum* or *hors-d'oeuvres*: small cockles dipped in sauce, slices of abalone (*Haliotis* shell), pieces of ginger, prawns, stuffed olives and so on. Several poultry and meat dishes follow: ducks and chickens with lotus seeds, chestnuts and walnuts, meat balls wrapped in dough as light as a dream, fledgling birds with tiny mushrooms or sucking-pig with crackling of unbelievable delicacy. Then comes the soup, which is usually the crown of the repast.

Most non-Chinese have a slightly glazed and despairing look by now and are

beginning to fall by the wayside. Those not accustomed to Chinese eating should be warned that there are never fewer dishes to a meal than there are guests round the table and there may be more. If there are twelve of you, it is as well to expect at least a dozen dishes to appear. If there are six you may be quite certain there will be more dishes than that. It is wise, therefore, to go carefully at the beginning of the meal and to resist the temptation of the *deem-sum*. It is not very good manners to refuse anything and, if you give up and sigh 'Oh, but I really couldn't!' half way through, your host is apt to think you do not like the food he has provided for you and 'face' will be lost.

After the soup comes the fish dish, or even several fish dishes, often done with ginger or cooked in wine, and then a sweet, or even several sweets. You are never quite certain that you are safe until the dessert appears: slices of orange or apples in syrup which you dip into iced water so that the syrup becomes a kind of toffee. Throughout the meal there is always rice and, at the end, you are asked if you would like *chow-fan* or noodles. *Chow-fan* is usually rice with egg and is provided in case there are any empty spaces not filled up by what has gone before. It is usually more polite to indicate that you could not face *chow-fan*, even if you are still hungry, which is almost inconceivable. Most Europeans are only too thankful that now they have really reached the end, and can surreptitiously undo a top button or two and relax.

With the meal one usually drinks *shau-shing*, a wine distilled from rice. There are many brands, and some are served warm like *sake*.They vary in colour from pale straw to deep brown. Some are sweet and cloying and some rather like a volatile sherry. You drink this potent fluid out of small porcelain cups, constantly toasting your friends and neighbours across the table, saying '*Yam seng*' ('Drink to the dregs' or 'Bottoms up'). You raise the cup with the thumb and first two fingers of both hands, and when you have drunk you show the inside of the cup in order to prove that there is nothing left in it. Needless to say there is no difficulty about refilling it. When the waiter fills your cup it is not necessary to interrupt your conversation to say 'Thank you'. You tap the tablecloth with two fingers of one hand, which means the same thing. When you have 'yammed', as they say, a few times everyone seems to become much more friendly and neighbourly than before, and the conversation, especially your own, becomes quite extraordinarily witty. When the soup arrives, particularly if it is sharks'-fin soup, the guests sometimes rise to their feet and toast their host, saying '*Yam seng*', bowing and showing their empty cups.

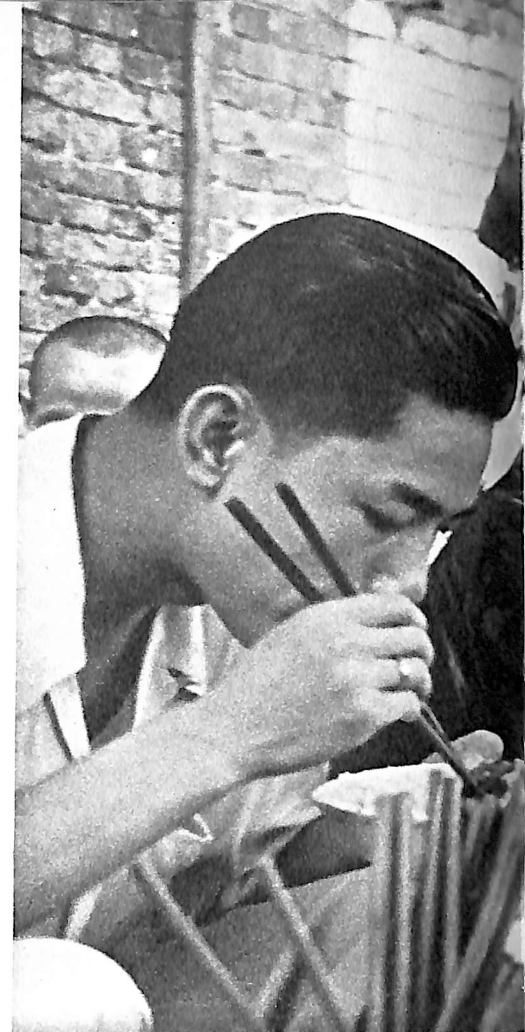
After the meal you may drink one of the fiery liqueurs made of rice which come in beautiful little stone bottles as though the liquid were high-explosive. Indeed, so it seems as it traces its way to its destination and sits there glowing like a hot coal.

The table, which looked so elegant and inviting at the beginning of the meal, is a sad sight two hours later. It is quite in order and not at all disgraceful to make a mess on the cloth, since that is what cloths are for. One picks one's teeth, holding the left hand over the mouth as one does so. It is quite good manners to belch and shows that you have enjoyed your meal. Even well-dressed ladies in the sleekest of *cheong-sams* do it.

When the business of eating in a restaurant is over you do not linger. Your host rises, bows and says 'Good night'. The party is over.

In Hong Kong only the very wealthy Chinese entertain in their own houses. Perhaps because of the over-crowded conditions under which they live, people of moderate means entertain in restaurants. The Chinese largely eat out anyway, like the French. Large family parties, with dozens of female relatives and children in the charge of one or more amahs, are a common sight in any Chinese eating-house. Father belches and picks his teeth. The women chatter, and the children wriggle and fidget while the amahs are kept busy slapping, straightening and admonishing.

Various styles of cooking are characteristic of different parts of China, and in Hong Kong you may sample them all. There are the styles of Peking, Canton, Szechuan, Shanghai, Tien-tsin, Hokkien and many others. The chief Cantonese delicacies are birds' nests and sharks' fins. The Peking *chef-d'oeuvre* is 'Peking duck', which is a duck dressed with its head resting on its back, roasted in such a way that it practically falls to pieces at a touch. In the Shanghai style you have meat done up in dough so light that it seems to be an airy nothing and melts away in the mouth.



At a modern Hong Kong supermarket *left* young girls eat crouching on the floor. Since the end of the second World War the island has become a major manufacturing centre, and at lunch-time the workers' restaurants *above* are always crowded. Men form the bulk of the working population; they are mainly employed in the manufacture of textiles, plastic goods and chemicals. The high birth-rate and the constant flow of refugees from China has accentuated Hong Kong's housing problem, and there are still thousands of families who have to eat and sleep in the streets *right*, or make their home on a roof-top or verandah

V. S. PRITCHETT

In search of Canada

The traveller who ranges across the 4 million square miles of Canada may be overawed by the size of the challenge nature offers to man. But the Canadians glory in the struggle, ploughing enormous prairie wheat farms, blasting highways through the Rockies, and creating modern cities across a continent



FROM San Francisco we flew north: out of the sunny city into the struggle with nature. Over Washington, the rainstorms began and, below, the forests came tramping down in endless wet armies to meet us. The sea turned grey, and it seemed that it, too, had its forests, for when we looked out over the water, innumerable wooded islands, like schools of whales, were nosing northward with us into dirty weather. The sea turned sallow and then rank ochreish where the silt of the Fraser River stained it far beyond its delta. Then, in a sudden vertical mix-up of mountain, cloud, sea, forest and long, straight streets of bungalows and green lawns, we bumped down into Vancouver. We were at the beginning of a journey from sea to sea across Canada, and the mountains stood like a lion in the path.

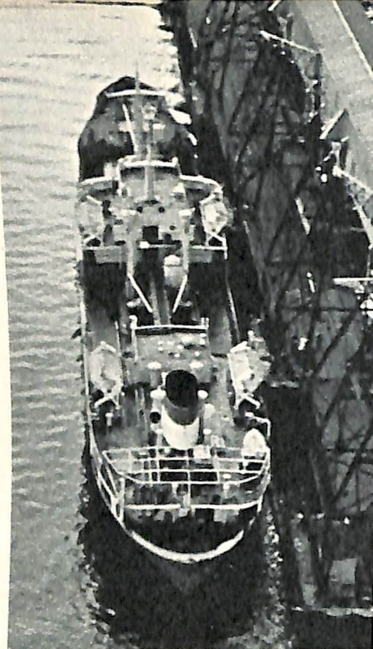
Were we in a new country? The immigration official had a Chinese face; the waiters at the hotel were Italian, German or Hungarian; there were Irish in the streets. So far, we might still be in the United States. But small things showed we were not: that first hot, full-bodied cup of tea in the hotel, tea drunk as a stimulant, not as a sedative; thicker, woollier clothes, provincial shops, an American accent softened by the quiet British intonation. A quiet, calm country, evidently not as rich as California. Anyone wanting to swear used British profanities. The girls with the 'natural' European look, rather than the American artifice. Smaller cars on the streets. An impression of restraint rather than exuberance; of tidiness.

In general, a mingling of British and American traits. One could say, outwardly American, inwardly British, yet perhaps Canada is the reverse of that. Perhaps Canada would turn out to be Canadian? Would this identifiable, distinctive Canada be revealed to us? It was too soon to say.

From the beginning of their history, the inhabitants of northern America have had to accept nature—not the mild, friendly nature of Europe, but nature wicked, relentless and hostile. Until the great advance of modern technology, Canadians were locked in a grinding struggle with the climate, with exhausting distances and, at last, with the Rockies. The Canadian passes were almost insuperable; nature there was at her worst.

Indians of the Pacific region fishing for salmon in the Thompson River, British Columbia. Their womenfolk clean the salmon, and allow them to dry in the sun. They preserve the roes by salting and burying them





A freighter in Vancouver harbour, one of the world's leading ports for grain, timber, oil, potash and a vast range of mineral products



Sooke Harbour, Vancouver Island, a small natural harbour used by the fishing fleet. The fishermen, mainly Canadian-Japanese, catch salmon, halibut and herring

For nearly a century longer than in the United States, life in Canada has been struggling to emerge from the epic stage; it is still pretty well in that stage in the Arctic, despite the aeroplane, the diesel engine, electric power and the opening up of enormous mineral wealth. From west to east, the most thickly populated belt is only 200 miles wide, and of the 19 million people, the greater part live in the Toronto triangle and the St. Lawrence Valley of Quebec; and trees, mountains, grass and the water of tens of thousands of lakes crowd down on man. The winds come down the central corridor from the north into the cities; the north is always in people's heads. The short summer and long winter impress nature on the mind even in cities, where, one might think, nature could be forgotten.

So in June we stood in Vancouver in the long, straight streets, and could feel the north in our backs. The warm weather was late in coming—and Vancouver can do better than this, as one realizes when the sun bursts out. To me, it is not a handsome town—what can one expect? Eighty years ago it was a rough little lumber port; now it is the third city of Canada and has a fine university. It has a stupendous situation. The fjords and channels of Canada's Pacific coast are one of the most powerful sights of North America. The clouds storm over snow peaks, the wild forests storm down to the sea.

The people of Vancouver are expansive. They take to the sea. It was not long before we were cruising in the sounds, the fjords and among the islands near the city. And there, as we penetrated these deep inlets, mile after mile, the wildness of the country, the sense of animal freedom, was brought home. Forest everywhere, forest at every turn, forest behind forest, mountain behind mountain; in some new stretch of water, sea and forest would seem to have been laughing together as we came in, and to have fallen into a watchful silence as we dodged the floating timber and forest jetsam.

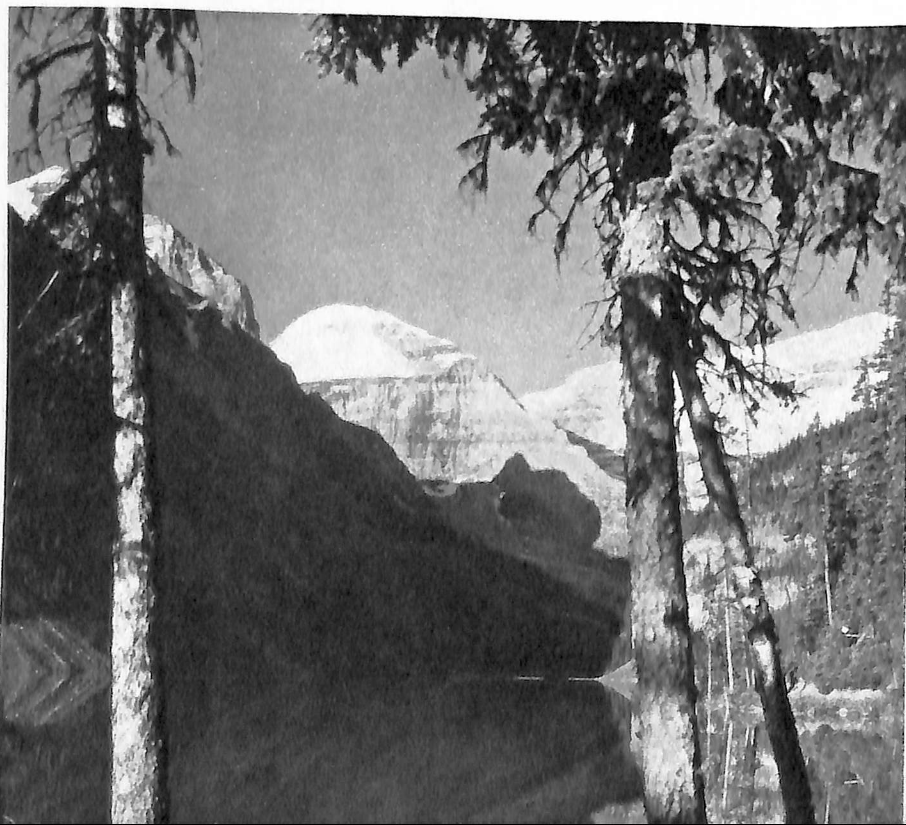
Here and there, on some steep slope, the forest was gashed, and that was a symbol of Canada—the felled trees, the logs rolling into the water. One saw the man with the axe, one heard the scream of the power saw and the sound of a tree falling. Here the logs were just waste matter, but on other rivers we could see those orderly rafts, floating silently, like vast geometrical propositions, from the forest to the mills or to the harbours. The log rafts, the log piles of Canada give to the inexhaustible savage landscape the first heartening signs of craftsmanship and the skills of civilization.

One felt here the warning in rock and tree that one feels all over Canada when one turns north: do not go too far. In a step you will be in total solitude. And later as you sit comfortably among the businessmen in a Vancouver club, watching ships load wheat for China and Europe and timber from the Canadian forests which supply nearly half our newsprint, your mind wanders off northward and you ask what people are doing two or three hundred miles away.

The answer is peculiar. To begin with there are very few people. But there is an odd statistic claiming that Canadians make more telephone calls than any other people on earth. Up there, then, they are talking. Stay a few days in a forest cabin and you will remember only two sounds: the scampering of chipmunks on the roof and the day-long shrilling of the party line. The Canadian is not a talkative man: the shrilling bell asserts that, among the billions of trees, a human being exists. Possibly alone.



Log booms and planks in the Burrard Inlet, which forms the north of the peninsula on which Vancouver stands. Timber is floated down the river from the forests of British Columbia; on arrival it is cut up for planks, or made into pulp for paper



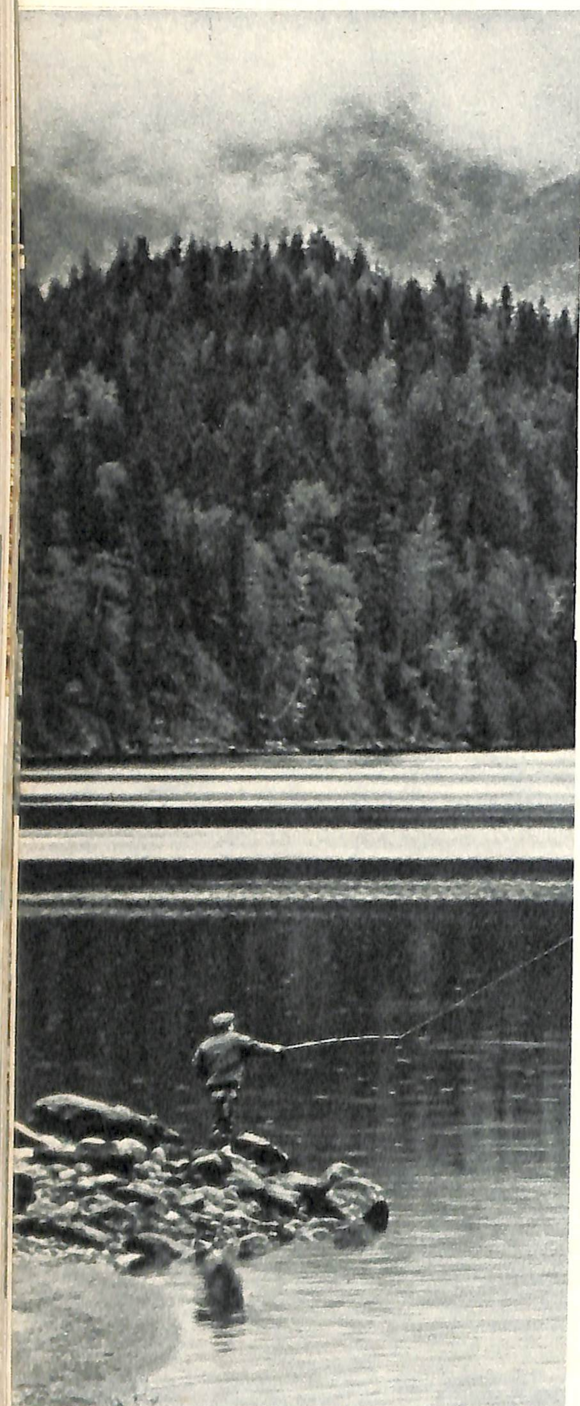
Looking across Thunder Bay, on the north side of Lake Superior, from the Trans Canada Highway. Part of the highway runs on the north of the lake from Fort William to Sault Ste. Marie—a distance of over 400 miles. For about the first hundred miles the road clings to the edge of the lake, giving magnificent views

A Rocky Mountain beauty spot: Lake Louise, in the Banff National Park on the borders of Alberta and British Columbia. Rupert Brooke wrote of the lake in 1913 that it was 'of another world'

Rocky Mountain fingerpost in the Yoho National Park, through which the Trans Canada Highway runs. The curious upright of the post is not carved, but is made from the trunk of a diseased tree. Other national parks in the area are the Kootenay, the Glacier and the Banff

MOUNT STEPHEN
ELEV 10495
PAGET PEAK
ELEV 8417
MOUNT FIELD
ELEV 8655

A fisherman waits for a trout or a pike in one of the many small lakes in the Banff National Park, Alberta. In the Rockies a fisherman will often have a whole lake to himself



All this is far less true of the cheerful, gregarious, outward-looking life of cities like Vancouver. At one time British Columbia might have drifted into the American Union; now no one in British Columbia would want it. But with the people of the American Pacific they share what South Americans call 'the Pacific sadness', a sense of having got to the limit you dreamed of. You are in heaven at last. *Now* what do you do? You dream no longer, which is a loss; so you enact dreams. Hence the exuberance, the fantasy.

Steady-minded people from Toronto and Ottawa enjoy this breath of heaven for a while; then suddenly they get worried about education and their children. They pack up and return east, for education does better in purgatory than in heaven.

But if British Columbia has its taste for lotus-eating and pleasure, it takes pleasure more strenuously. The escape is to the sea, to the camp and to those overwhelming Canadian passions—skiing and fishing. Canadians are men of the open air. When nature relents in the struggle she soothes them with sports. The Canadians use their dry, sunny winters as skilfully as the Swiss use theirs.

Canada, it has been said, is a country held together by two railway termini and 4,000 miles of telegraph wire. You get into the train at Vancouver and soon learn what distance means in a country with a small population. On the opening journey to Banff, for miles up the broad yellow Fraser River, one is in comfortable farmland. Hours go by. In the melancholy twilight across the river one sees only the lights of an occasional few houses; or a boat tied up by the river at sunset, the loneliest sight in the world. There were few tourists on the train so early in the season; the passengers were a working crowd. At night, as the climb begins into the Rockies, one is among the trees; in the morning, on the mountains, there are more trees: armies of firs relieved by stippled poplars, burned by frost. Occasionally one sees two or three elk standing under the firs.

The train is running beside the coppery, foaming, rocky water of the Kicking Horse River up to the pass that takes the mind back to the Gold Rush tales, and by now the mountain walls are standing out, greenish-grey and naked, snow-slabbed, with their terraces arranged by nature in dreadful precipices. These mountains are brutal in their mass. It was a feat getting the railway through here to Vancouver, and as great a feat getting the transcontinental highway through in 1962. It is one of the spectacular rides of the western continent.

Now our train crosses the continental divide. The site of Banff, within one of the national parks in the Rockies, is spectacular. The town looks very Scottish, clean, trim. The Bow River flows under its granite bridge as gravely as does the Tweed. The celebrated lakes add to the sense of the Scottish Highlands magnified.

Banff is a playground, full of healthy, cheerful young people, and their faces have a northern openness and candour. Their minds are on the ski runs. But I am not a mountain man, and the Rockies impressed me most from a distance, as we got out of them into the prairie. Here the country in June is kinder, tall grass grows, the poplar replaces the fir, and cattle are grazing. One is still over 3,000 feet up at Calgary, and the country rolls. The wheat was springing out of the black soil, and at this cheerful city one sees the first signs of great wealth—the wealth of the cattle and oil men. Alberta and parts of Saskatchewan and British Columbia float on oil and natural gas.



A solitary combine harvester threshing swathed grain on one of the vast wheatfields of Saskatchewan; and *right* a prairie farm, set in a chequerboard of fields stretching without a hill to the horizon. Most wheat farms are between 500 and 2,000 acres

A rancher with a few of his 15,000 head of cattle on a ranch just outside Calgary, Alberta, in the heart of Canada's cattle country. This ranch extends to 6,400 acres—medium size by Canadian standards—and is worked by the rancher with only two ranch hands



Main Street, Calgary, looking towards the shopping centre. Besides being a cattle town, Calgary is rapidly becoming one of the centres of the oil and natural gas industry. About 400 oil companies have offices there, many of them in the tall block shown here

People have declared that the plains are monotonous. For myself the Canadian prairie, considered as a sight to the eye and an emotional experience, shares the spell of the Polish and the Russian steppe.

What absorbs the eye is the subtle colouring and texture of the prairie country—those greens turning to madder and yellow, to greys and blues of intricate delicacy—and the land mass itself flowing from fold to fold, from horizon to horizon as the light changes and the wind moves over it. The wild duck fly up from among the prairie flowers and the hidden rivers, for one does not see a great river like the Saskatchewan until one comes suddenly upon it in its wide gully; a human being is no more than a dot of a pencil; a house or a grain elevator can be seen for an hour as one travels toward it. Look back an hour later and there its shape still stands like a ship one has passed at sea. There is no mist. The only sound is the wind. And the simple meeting of empty sky and lonely earth on the horizon's circle fills one with exaltation and fear.

At Winnipeg the flat country was still with us, but now there were sappy scrub and long coppices of aspen, poplar and cottonwood. This is traditional wheat country, a continuation of North Dakota and Minnesota. Winnipeg is still called 'the gateway to the West'. It has the ugliness of the English industrial Midlands, relieved by fine trees and by some pretty streets in the suburbs. In this hot, dusty, growing city of half a million, one meets at last a real, well-rooted Canada. Winnipeg is not as polished as Toronto or anywhere near as sophisticated as Montreal, but it is as individual as all other Canadian cities and puts the fundamental Canadian case. The first things to catch the eye are the domes of Russian and Ukrainian churches. Here the non-British immigrant becomes important. The Ukrainians came here around the turn of the century from the richest wheat-bearing lands of Russia. The older men still wear the long beard and sheepskin coat; the older women are still weather-scarred like Russian peasants. To the north, on Lake Winnipeg, are the Scandinavians and Icelanders; in the city itself is a Jewish population, as well as the German and Italian settlers who arrived in the last few years. The original population includes a very strong outpost of French-Canadians. Their churches across the river in St. Boniface and their seminary are the best buildings in the city. Winnipeg's money and power are in the hands of people of British stock, who are now less than half of the population.

Flying out of Winnipeg you get a shock: the sight of thousands of lakes, gay eyelets of blue looking out of the face of vegetation, and you realize how much of Canada is wild water. It is forest and lake all the way to the Great Lakes, and hardly a road anywhere. One understands why this country was crossed by water first, not by land; and why now it is the aeroplane that is opening up the northern territories. How else could one get to most of it?

The Rockies, the prairie and now the Great Lakes and the great St. Lawrence River, the main artery of the country. The blue inland seas, silvered by the wake of steamers, stare up like vast wind-smeared mirrors from the earth. The earliest dramas of the penetration of the continent strike up in the mind. La Salle, Jolliet, the Indian wars come to life in one's head; the character of those early North Americans was formed by something new to Europeans—endless forest, liberating rivers, inland oceans. The continental emotion moved in on these men and has remained ever since in the North American mind. It seizes every newcomer.



Bronco riding during the Calgary Stampede. Stampede Week takes place every July, beginning with a six-mile parade through the streets. Events include Brahma bull riding, calf roping and chuckwagon racing

Now we are in Ontario, Canada's stroke of luck, with its northern but tolerable climate, good farmland, a countryside that would seem very English to the English and comfortable, at least to the Scots. Here in Toronto, and on up to Ottawa and Montreal,we are in the most densely populated, thriving and industrialized part of Canada, the richest market, where the British background is strongest. Conservative, solid, cautious, Ontario could be southern England except for one thing: a certain staidness. Toronto thinks Vancouver mad and dangerously nonconformist; Vancouver thinks Toronto conformist and dull. Until the immigration of the last twenty years, Toronto was in the grip of Presbyterian rectitude. But today Toronto is obviously a gayer and livelier city than it used to be. Intellectually it has awakened. It now produces poets and satirists. It has begun to laugh.

Toronto has a substantial red-brick Victorian charm mixed in with its American innovations. Its older houses with sharply curved gables seem always to be shaded by avenues of maples. It is a well-painted place and, like all Canadian cities, distinctive. This is very noticeable in Ontario—Windsor, Kingston, London are all different from one another.

A summer journey along the long shore of Lake Ontario and down the St. Lawrence is meadowy and charming. The farmhouses are substantial, the great barns impressive. Years ago a whole village would turn out for a barn-raising. After the noble barns, the curious church spires catch the eye. They are commonly hexagonal, often built of aluminium—for Canada has more of this metal than it knows what to do with. It gives a blinding, piercing originality to the churches, and they are one of the aesthetic sights of the province. The barns, the metal spires, the split-rail fences in the long fields that go down to the St. Lawrence—this is the constructed Canada I shall remember.



Much that is peaceful and traditional still survives out in the Canadian countryside. This little white-painted church stands just outside Rossport, Ontario, near the Trans Canada Highway. It has been preserved by the older residents

The country is crowded where the train branches off into the woods toward Ottawa. The bell of the diesel rings continually for stations and crossings, and when one reaches the wide Ottawa River and sees the green copper-roofed granite of the capital on its cliff above the water, one exclaims with affectionate recognition. This is not Durham; it is not Aberdeen; but in its determinedly Victorian way, it has character. Here at last is a city with a skyline. And if one grins at the French château architecture mixed in with the Victorian, at the general air of Balmoral and granite, one remembers that this is a sign of how much later most Canadian architecture is than American architecture. Canada began to build when, alas, the lovely classical architecture of the American Revolutionary period was beginning to go out.

There is one exquisite Victorian thing in Ottawa. It is on Parliament Hill, where Scots burst into tears of patriotism when they see the Trooping of the Colour. I am thinking of the parliamentary library, with its little pink-sugar columns in the dome and the delicate carving of the bookcases. The inside of the centre block of the Parliament buildings has a miniature charm; the outside is forbidding and Presbyterian, redeemed only by the picturesque folly of the green copper roofing.

The Canadians have a genius for making parks of all sizes—the Gatineau Park north of Ottawa is as fine as any wild park one can visit near a civilized city. Even the great rafts of logs seem to drift down the river in silent, dreaming islands of blameless utility. But the trees and the timber here begin to belong to another Canada, which one had first seen as an outpost in Winnipeg: the Canada of the

French. Here the *Canadien,* as distinct from the Canadian, makes himself felt. People think little of Hull, the city just across the Ottawa river in Quebec, blocked out of view by a mountain of logs in the timber yard; but it has the best restaurant in the vicinity, one of the most charming on the whole North American continent, and it is totally French.

In the streets of Hull, and in the street market of Ottawa, one hears *Canadien* French—seventeenth-century French, in some respects, in which English mingles. As one travels along the St. Lawrence to Montreal, the French character of the towns becomes stronger. At Rigaud, the fine seminary takes one's mind to Tours or Poitiers. There were wine drinkers on the train. At Vaudreuil one might have been on the Seine, for the beautiful lake passes into little channels flecked by the mirrored birch and maple; in the gardens the beans were neatly growing. Monet could have painted the watery scene, as if the intimacy and the light of France had been brought here.

In Montreal, Canada's most exciting city, one finds the mass confrontation

Massive grain elevators at Port Arthur, Ontario, at the head of the Great Lakes. Vast storage space is needed, because the St. Lawrence Seaway, between Lake Ontario and Montreal, is closed by ice in winter





Montreal's main thoroughfare, St. Catherine Street, seen from the intersection with Drummond Street. St. Catherine's is one of the busiest streets in the whole of Canada, with the main department stores, banks, cinemas, theatres and restaurants

of two races. An industrial port, this metropolis of Canada has a Londonish air about it, as it lies under the smoke of the ships in the docks. It is a place of weight. At night, the high buildings are slabs of electricity in the sky. By day the traffic surges across the great bridges of the superb St. Lawrence, the streets are packed. You climb up to the hill that stands like a volcano in the middle of the city, through streets that are alive with interest. In the French partof the city, the outside staircases (built so originally to conserve space and heat), the crowded balconies where families sit on rockers in the shade of the maples, give an originality to the architecture. There are fine churches, and there are two famous universities.

The Anglo-French mixture in Montreal is bizarre. It is curious to lunch at a French-Canadian club which looks entirely English in its conduct and decorum. It is a pleasure to see *tavernes* instead of the forbidding Licensed Premises of the rest of Canada. Montreal has something of American luxury, the sagacity of London, the briskness of New York, the gaiety of Europe.

The very tension between the two cultures and religions is exciting to the mind even though, outside of political and business circles, the two peoples interpenetrate very little. They are like separate currents of two rivers that have been joined by events that happened 200 years ago—indeed, if one goes back to the fur trade, much longer than that. The French Canadians are nearly a third of the country's population, the oldest historically established in the northern part of the continent and —here's the rub—they have nothing like a proportional share of economic power. Until only a few years ago they were resigned to this. Now they are not. The race of peasant farmers who had formed a frugal, stagnant community, the only true peasantry on the European model in North America, who had scarcely changed an opinion since the seventeenth century, whose politics were rhetorical and corrupt and whose education, directed by religion, equipped no one to live in the modern world, has been transformed since the second World War and is likely to change the balance of Canadian life.

The city of Quebec has one advantage: it is almost entirely French. The tiny Anglo-Canadian minority go to their own churches and have little contact with the *Canadiens*; though I have met people in the university who do make contacts. I

find the *Québecois* excellent company, very genial and far from insular. What a contrast there is between Quebec and Vancouver! Here Canada, and the St. Lawrence that now takes ships a thousand miles into the inland seas, are guarded by a fortress that was strengthened every generation until the nineteenth century—a real fortress in the old European style. Quebec is the only really European city in North America; its life is untouched by the hordes of tourists in search of the picturesque. From its cliff, the sight of the wide, forested river is stirring to the imagination. The grey stone of the city has rudimentary colonial primness and harshness. The appearance is a mixture of the severe and gracious, and the trees are tall and fine.

Quebec ought, in a poetic way, to be the terminal point of the transcontinental journey across this bilingual nation. But it is no longer the fortress commanding the entrance to the interior. The real Land's End of mainland Canada—and the end of my transcontinental journey—is the port of Halifax. Its vast harbour was the assembly point of Atlantic convoys in the last war; and for eastern Canada it has the added importance of being, along with Saint John, New Brunswick, the only mainland port open when the St. Lawrence is closed by winter. Halifax has some character as a Victorian Anglo-Scottish town; it has fine hospitals, Dalhousie University and several colleges, and its environs are romantically pretty. There are many lakes and rivers among the forests and farms of Nova Scotia.

But Canada is all paradox, and once again, in these Maritime Provinces, the Canadian difficulty appears. These provinces, and Nova Scotia particularly, are a natural continuation of Maine, but they are at once the most deeply British and the most anciently American part of Canada. The inhabitants speak of Canada as if it were foreign to them. They are on their own, pursuing an un-American and un-Canadian, un-modern British way of life. They are living still in something like the easy-going colonial existence of the early eighteenth century. Money counts for nothing—except inherited money; caste, not cash, gives a man distinction. To be poor is no disgrace; indeed, it is a matter of respect. Nova Scotia strikes one as being rather like Ireland, the Scottish Highlands or the eccentric parts of Cornwall.

The Maritimes represent a happy indifference to everything North America stands for; these provinces boast that they produce more men of brains, more leaders, than any other part of Canada, that their culture is deeper and that theirs is the happiest place on the harassed continent. The little ports and villages are peaceful, the rocky shores are wild. A little town like Lunenburg, with its white frame churches, its droll charm and its small boatbuilding yards, is a gem. The wooden houses have their verandas and balustrades; occasionally, on an older one, one sees the widow's walk. This is the land of the lobster and the famous Atlantic salmon; fishing—incredible to European ears—often is free.

Now in spring the lupins were growing wild in the fields, the late lilac was in the gardens. More than 150 years ago the author William Cobbett wrote with fervour of this country, where he fell in love with a local beauty and wanted to work a farm when he was a younger man. It is probably less prosperous and less populated than in his time, but it pleases. Six stocks, unmelted by the New World, live here side by side: the old Highland Scots, still occasionally speaking Gaelic on Cape Breton Island (it is taught in some schools), French Acadians, Germans, the descendants of the old Loyalists, the Irish and the British.



In Montreal French and English Canadians emphasize their national cultures. This scene, with its white-flannelled bowls player and genteel silver tea service, might be in Cheltenham or Torquay: it is in fact at the Montreal Lawn Bowling Club

Siamese celebrations

When the Thais have something to celebrate, there are no half-measures about their enthusiasm. Cooks sweat to feed the multitudes, loudspeakers blare constantly, and sideshows exhibit freaks or put on boxing displays. But religion is always in the background, as old men paste gold leaf on statues of the Buddha, and officials burn candles before portraits of the king





A devotee applying gold leaf to a statue of the Buddha in the Phra Pathom Chedi at Nakorn Pathom, outside Bangkok. During November a three-day fair is held at the temple, and the grounds are packed

In the town of Chachoengsao, about twenty or thirty miles from Bangkok, we attended the ceremony of the Trooping of the Colour. As usual monks were well in attendance. There were ten of them, seated on a raised dais. The colonel knelt at the altar and prayed. Then the monks chanted, while the sacred string was passed through their fingers. At the saluting base, as the soldiers marched past, a very old monk, who was standing on a specially constructed platform with an umbrella to protect him against the sun, swished sacred water over them.

Towards the end of the Christian year the Wat Sathorn fair takes place. Wat Sathorn is two miles from Chachoengsao, and the Buddhist monastery is one of the most sacred in Thailand. During the fair schools close for a week, and the town fills to capacity. There were processions throughout the week, starting from the Wat—which is a series of temple buildings, forming a Buddhist monastery—and leading to the town, and hundreds of sideshows. There were exhibitions of all kinds of craft work and Thai boxing, of human freaks and mis-shapen animals. Food was everywhere and in abundance. It was fried on braziers on the ground, passers-by kicked the dust all over it, and flies settled on it in swarms; but it was all eaten, and customers came back for more. *Mekhong*, the whisky of Thailand, was consumed in vast quantities. The town smelt of chicken, pork and garlic.

Hundreds of thousands of people poured into the town. They came from Bangkok, from the outlying villages. Some came by river boats to the highway, where they boarded taxis or coaches; thousands came by train. The ubiquitous banana was fried everywhere. Thai pancakes sizzled, chickens were chopped up and the pieces flung into blackened pans, rice boiled in enormous saucepans. Perspiring Chinese cooks stood all day by the charcoal braziers they had mounted on unstable stands. They rolled some white, paste-like substance in their hands, then deftly flicked off pieces from finger to finger into the pan—and noodles were the result. Money rolled in, in one-baht notes, in fifty-satang pieces. A pail of water, black and sticky, gurgled as the plates were splashed into it for a make-believe wash. No one had more than a yard or two to go for a feed.

Coconut after coconut was split open; straws were pushed in; and the customers filed past and took the coconuts. It was like a conveyor belt in its unending rhythm.

Tins of milk were perforated and passed over. Pawpaws were sliced and the red fruit was grabbed by eager hands. Fish were clutched, passed through the rollers of a portable mangle and eaten on the spot.

The streets were jammed with cars, coaches, taxis, bicycles and the three-wheeled bicycle taxis known as samlors. Now and again a water buffalo would come in from one of the fields on either side of the road and stand still, with its massive head swinging slowly from side to side, while car horns blared stridently, bicycle bells rang and people shouted. This had no effect, and the animal would choose its own time to move, ambling off slowly and clumsily. The din was terrific.

Two miles away, in the temple of Wat Sathorn, there was a different kind of noise—the chanting of monks, the murmur of over a thousand voices, as people flocked into the temple and pasted gold leaf on a row of Buddhas. Huge gongs at intervals drowned the murmur and the chanting with their reverberating booms. Outside the temple, there were long benches with rows of Buddhas and before each Buddha was a wooden bowl. An altar was placed at one end of the rows, and the faithful would approach it and kneel. Then they would rise, hand the monk some notes, receiving in exchange some coins which they would place in the bowls, kneeling to do so. Joss sticks burned, aged men and women made slow and painful progress to the altar to lay down their flowers, and then knelt to the image of the Buddha. The strident sound of a percussion band came from another part of the grounds, and some amateur performers gave a display of classical Thai dancing.

After the fair, the next event was the celebration of the king's birthday. One of the boys' secondary schools was called upon to play a prominent part by supplying a band and leading all schools to the Changwad or provincial hall. The pupils wore scout uniforms and carried staves with which they had been practising military exercises. Then they took up their positions and led the school along the drive and out on to the road, collecting every school on the way. At the Changwad hall, people were lining up to sign the birthday greetings book, and in the main hall ten monks were intoning prayers. To the left of the altar was a large portrait of the king. At intervals a roll of drums would drown the chanting of the monks. A presentation of decorations for merit was performed by the regional and provincial governors. As they entered the hall, they bowed very low before the portrait of the king and then took their places. Five decorations were conferred. The recipients bowed to the portrait, bowed to the regional governor, received the award, bowed again and withdrew.

Then one of the local government officers chanted prayers. He stood in front of a garlanded stand, called a mai-sai, which has six tiers. He lit a candle and resumed his prayers. Then he took three candles, placed a leaf behind them, which gave them the appearance of a spray, lit them and made three circular motions with them. After passing his hand over and behind the candles and then towards the portrait, the officer handed the spray to his neighbour, who did exactly the same with it and passed it on. While it was going from hand to hand two more sprays were lit, and these followed the first round the room. The motion of passing the hand over the candles and towards the portrait of the king is a symbolic transfer of good wishes to the king.

There was a salute of guns, followed by the playing of the Thai national anthem; and the ceremony was over.



Girls from Pattani, South Thailand. The sunshades are painted by artists who work with as many as three colours on the brush at the same time, producing flower patterns with a single sweep of the wrist



Vegetable sellers in Bangkok's Floating Market. Platforms, verandas and houses are on stilts, and purchases are made from passing boats. The housewife stays in her boat, while fruit and vegetables are handed to her

JOHN MASSEY STEWART

Mosques and white gold

Uzbekistan, in Soviet Central Asia, is one of the oldest civilized regions of the world; within it lie the famous oasis cities of Samarkand, Bukhara and Tashkent. This land of mosques and minarets, of oriental people in multi-coloured robes, is also a modern republic, which owes its wealth to cotton—the 'white gold' of Uzbekistan



The external boundries of India as shown in the map are neither correct nor authentic.

FOR CENTURIES the exotic names of Samarkand and Bukhara have beckoned the traveller with their prospect of oriental mystery and splendour. The poet Flecker immortalized 'the golden road to Samarkand', but foreigners were forbidden. Today the traveller can fly in via Tashkent, the sprawling industrial capital of Uzbekistan—a Soviet republic nearly twice the size of Great Britain, and three hours ahead of Moscow time.

Alas, for the legend! Samarkand, one of the oldest cities of Central Asia, now makes chemicals, tractor parts and cinema apparatus. Its 200,000 inhabitants are mainly Uzbeks, Tadzhiks from the neighbouring republic, and Russians who conquered the area for the Tsarist Empire in the 1860s. It boasts the republic's largest university, with 10,000 students, a Gagarin Street, and a Park of Rest and Culture with a Hall of Crazy Mirrors. Yet the turquoise-tiled mosques and mausoleums still reflect the splendours of the fourteenth-century conqueror Tamerlane, who made his native town a magnificent capital and lies buried beneath a tomb made of the largest block of jade in the world.

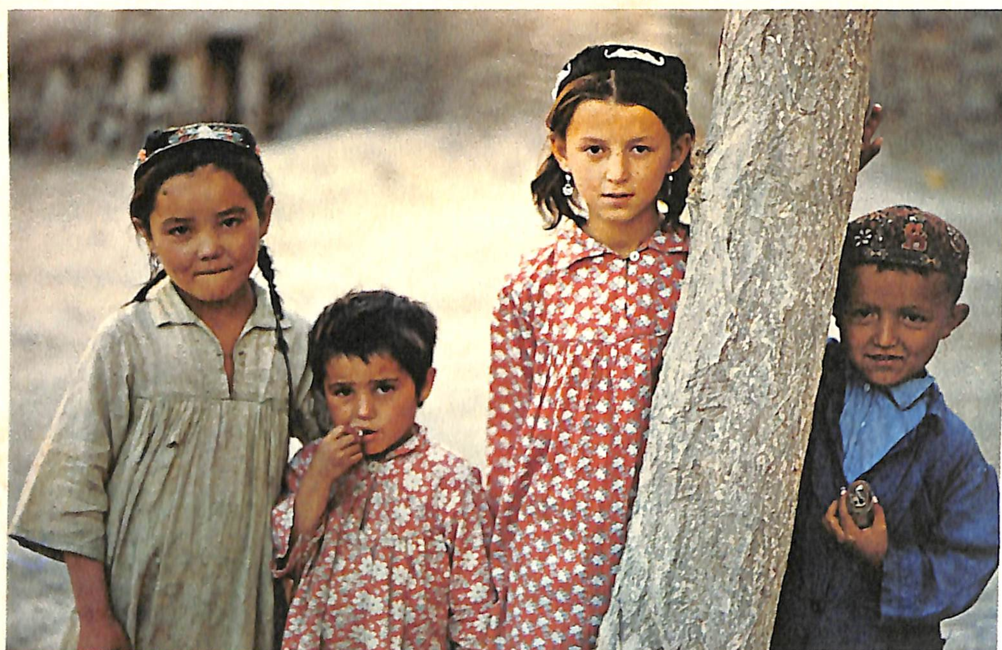
Bukhara, world-famous for the Turkmen carpets once sold in its great bazaar, remains one huge museum. It is a maze of dusty, unpaved alleyways between whitewashed, windowless adobe walls. The one-storey Uzbek houses are built round shady courtyards, where fruit grows in the scorching summer.

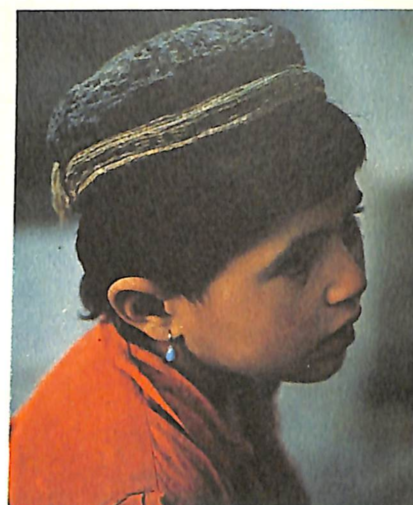
The Turkic-speaking, traditionally Muslim Uzbeks (6 million altogether) are a delightful, lively people, with pale mahogany skin and half-moon eyes. Many younger men wear European dress while retaining the *tubetyeka*—the embroidered Uzbek skullcap; while almost all the bearded, turbaned elders wear the *khalat*—a brightly patterned robe sashed at the waist—and long, soft leather boots. Most Uzbek women wear ankle-length silk or cotton dresses of zigzag turquoise, plum-red or yellow patterns, and have their silky black hair in waist-length plaits.

In summer months, Uzbek men relax in the *chaikhanas*, the open-air tea-houses in the shade of trees. There they sit cross-legged on carpeted platforms above cooling streams, drinking green tea and betting on quail fights.

Towering over Samarkand are the remains of the largest mosque in Central Asia, the Bibi Khanum, called after Tamerlane's Chinese wife. Bibi Khanum's mummified body was disinterred some years ago from her Samarkand tomb



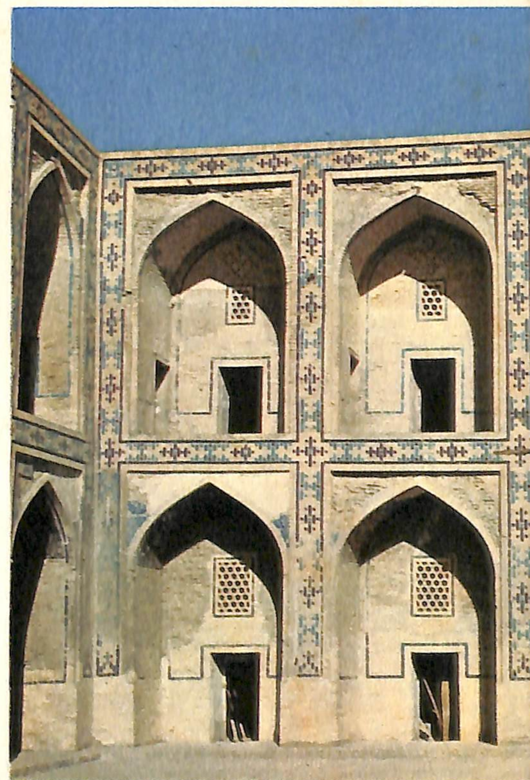




The Uzbek children of Bukhara, with their pale mahogany skin and great vitality, are entrancing. The eldest girl is of mixed Russian and Tartar type

Middle-aged and elderly Uzbeks at prayer in Samarkand's last functioning mosque, the fifteenth-century Khodzha-Akhrar. They are dressed in turbans and Uzbek robes, or *khalats,* and have placed their shoes behind them. Despite Soviet persecution of Islam, old beliefs die hard

Bukhara's Tower of Death, 300 feet high, was built in 1127 of bricks made with salty local clay mixed with unsalty clay from Samarkand, and eggs, flour and camels' milk. Bands of brick patterns decorate it from top to bottom. It is the minaret of the Kalyan Mosque, but has also served as a watchtower, and as a landmark and beacon for desert caravans. It is called the Tower of Death because criminals were thrown from it until Russian rule in 1868. The early Bolsheviks are said to have revived the practice



The courtyard of Bukhara's Ulug Bek *medresseh* or religious college, built in the fifteenth century. Ulug Bek, grandson of Tamerlane, was a great astronomer and scholar. The college is now closed down



F. L. LUCAS

Iceland's lonely beauty

Europe's westernmost state nudges the Arctic Circle; its volcanic landscape is harsh, and its winters are long and dark. But there is a magnetic attraction in this island of lava and icefield, where the people have time to welcome the visitor, and schoolboys know the heroic verses of the sagas by heart





'GOING TO Iceland! Why on earth? Where it rains, so they say, for 300 days in the year! Didn't the Danes maintain that the Devil, piqued by God's creation, tried what *he* could do—and created Iceland? Deserts of ice or cinders; and a coastal strip only less desolate, where buses toss seasick passengers, for interminable hours, along pot-holed roads to rare hotels, where they feed, one gathers, on poor coffee and soured milk, on omelettes that look as if erupted from a sulphur-hole, or excellent salmon sodden to a pale pink dough. Midges, too! And all to see a few geysers that seldom work, a few cauldrons of bubbling mud, in spots that look and smell like hell!'

All this, of course, is largely libel. Granted, a hundred years ago Icelandic travel was no holiday. Dauntless clergymen from Victorian England have recorded how they pounded on ponies for twenty hours at a stretch, guided by guides who did not know the way, tumbling into quicksandy torrents or as rain-sodden as if they had, eating smoked salmon tasting of sheep's dung, or mutton coated with dirt and hair, and sleeping in turf-hovels with twenty other sleepers in the same murky, unventilated room, its earthen floor sometimes embellished with the bones and heads of fish. Only thirty years ago Iceland was something of an adventure. Even today its fickle climate prevents this lonely land from attracting the type of tourists who like to be cruised about the tropics as stuffed animals, or to go native on equatorial islands, basking on beaches beside females attired in two pieces of string. But so much the better. Heaven forbid that Iceland should become popular.

Nor is Iceland for the bustler. It is too big; and its weather teaches patience. Icelanders disdain hurry. Their summer days, their winter nights, are long. And perhaps they retain some of their forebears' fatalism. Destiny will bring each of us to his final destination at its own hour—no sooner, no later—however much we loiter or hurry, fret or fume.

Suppose, for example, one wants ponies for a trip through the desert interior, where they are still essential. (Everywhere else in Iceland roads and cars have so multiplied that these charming little animals, who smell their way with uncanny

Volcanoes and geysers litter Iceland, and eruptions are not uncommon. At the end of 1963 the Atlantic coughed up this brand-new volcanic island, named Surtsey, seventeen miles off the south coast. The birth was spectacular

sagacity through the holes and quicksands of Icelandic rivers, are used less and less, except for rounding up the vast flocks of sheep in autumn—and, alas, for food.) I have known a worthy farmer promise to arrive with his beasts at nine, yet be still invisible at eleven; by which time the too-impatient traveller was miles away in another direction on his own feet. Even from London (though of course engine trouble can always occur) our Icelandic plane left five hours late; so that, instead of landing comfortably by bedtime, we crept into our Reykjavik hotel, like belated revellers, long after dawn.

Again, at the island's south-east corner lies a fishing hamlet linked with the mainland only by a long, dreary isthmus. Its scenery, indeed, is magnificent, when mists permit—less like Iceland than Greenland. Sheer from the shore tower the black mountain-walls of the Vatnajökull, with four great glaciers snaking down them to the sea. But the place can prove a trap. Along this coast not even Icelandic skill and patience can bridge the shifting glacier-rivers toward Reykjavik. No ship for a fortnight. One bus a week to the north—and, even then, days more in buses to the capital. On Fridays a plane is due at five in the afternoon. But the heavens lowered. It might come, they said, at six? Then at seven? Then at nine next morning? At nine, still nothing. Were we to kick our heels for a whole week in this gaunt spot and its primitive hostelry? Wearily familiar grew the road to the airline agent's small white house. And yet, though so imperturbable, he was charming. How could one not be touched when, shyly but proudly, he produced a letter from the British Air Ministry thanking his brother (now dead) for the gallant rescue of an RAF pilot in 1942-3? One learns to respect, and like, this reticent race.

Mercifully, the skies cleared. Welcome as Noah's dove, at six o'clock the next afternoon the plane descended. But if the skies had not cleared? In Iceland, as in the Orient, the lesson is—patience.

Yet there are those who return there year after year. Iceland is for lovers of loneliness. A fifth larger than Ireland, it averages only four people per square mile; eighty per cent is uninhabited. Elbow room at last! Iceland is for lovers of scenery that keeps its primitive savagery. All its horizons are rimmed by desolate mountains or a desolate sea. Of its 40,000 square miles, 4,650 are lava; 5,000 ice. The Vatnajökull in itself is an icefield as large as all Corsica.

One of my vividest memories is a rocky pit in the central desert, a few feet square and perhaps ten deep, with a brook hissing through its floor, and a few great stones piled for a roof. Above it, the black basalt bastion of the 5,000-foot Herdubreith, topped with its pyramid of snow. Around it, the sullen wastes of lava, rough and wrinkled like the hide of some vast petrified lizard; or stretches of black volcanic sand that nourish only a few ears of lyme-grass, or perhaps one yellowed grass stalk to a square foot, or perhaps nothing at all. Yet here, said our guide, Sverrir Tryggvason (who still bore, typically, the names of two ancient kings of Norway), there lived about 1700, summer and winter through, a lonely outlaw, subsisting on an occasional stray sheep.

Above all, Iceland is for those who love the ghosts of the past. Its human past, indeed, is exceptionally brief. It has been inhabited for a little over a thousand years. There must still be many spots among its solitudes where no human foot has ever trod. It has few ancient ruins. For the climate has been too fierce; the materials too frail. Even the spacious Reykjavik Museum shows few relics of the

past whose merit is more than merely curious. But what Iceland does keep is the memory of a unique race of men. One goes there above all for the sake of the sagas, those first masterpieces of Western prose-narrative since the fall of Greece and Rome.

The stories of the sagas show often a Homeric sense of loyalty, chivalry and fortitude; a Homeric sense of fate, that sometimes lifts their disasters to a tragic dignity. 'No man can live till evening, who is doomed to die at morn.' But this fate a man can meet well, or less well. And this fatalism, weakening to weaker minds, could yet strengthen the strong. At times it could teach a deeper generosity. Gisli's wife Auda, for example, has let slip a heedless speech that will cost her brother's and her husband's lives. 'I do not blame thee,' says Gisli. 'For, once things are doomed, someone *must* utter the words that seem to make them come to pass.'

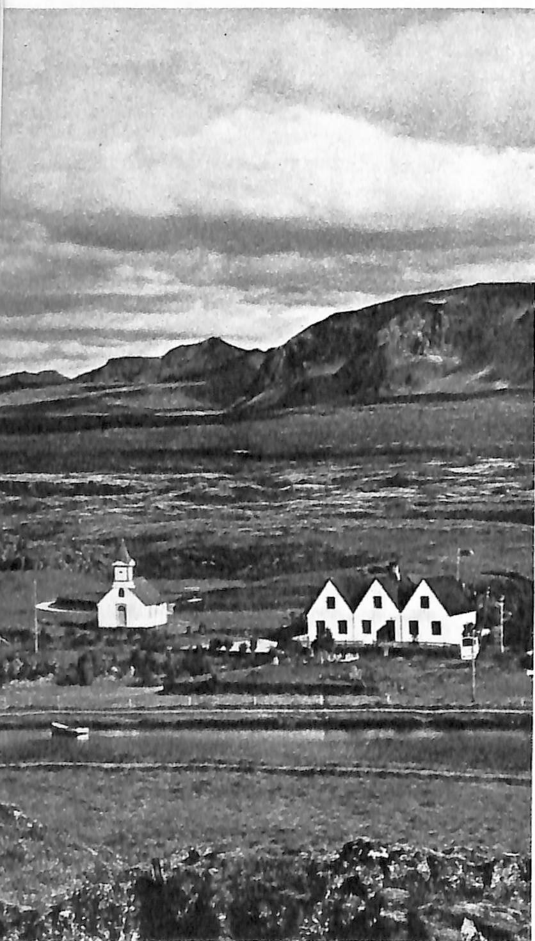
Better know the sagas without going to Iceland than go to Iceland without knowing the sagas—as the Icelanders, intelligent race, know them still. Lonely farmers keep them on their shelves. When I first went to Iceland in 1934, the

Iceland's economy is based almost entirely on fishing, and the island is surrounded by some of the richest grounds in the world. To protect them, Iceland extended her territorial limits from four to twelve miles in 1958. This caused clashes with other nations—notably Britain. Most Icelandic fishermen stay in home waters: they need go no farther



engineer on my ship was said to know many of them by heart. On a recent trip I recalled to the serving-maid at a little farm, nestling among its waterfalls opposite the snows of Eyjafjall, the words of Gunnar when he chose the risk of death rather than exile from the home he loved: 'Fair is the Lithe—it never looked so fair. The fields are yellow, and the home-mead mown. I will ride back home, and not fare abroad at all.' And at once the girl of sixteen capped my English with the Icelandic original of seven centuries ago.

Everywhere the traveller treads on ancient memories, and the ghosts of the past return. Take the road north from Reykjavik. Out of the sombre water of Whale-firth (where, during the second World War, gathered convoys for Russia) you will see rising the tiny rock-pillar of Geirsholmi, where once lived for years the unjustly outlawed Hord, with at times 200 confederates. Crowded like gulls on a crag, they had no room for idle mouths. Hence their simple rule that any man sick more than three nights was pitched over the cliff. In the end they were treacherously slaughtered by the neighbouring farmers; only Hord's brave wife Helga swam more than two miles to the mainland, with her little sons of eight and four.



The church in Thingvellir National Park, about thirty-five miles north of Reykjavik. For hundreds of years this valley was the site of the Althing, the annual general assembly of the Icelanders, attended by all men of standing. The site was chosen in 930 by a nobleman named Grimur Goatbeard, and is now one of the most venerated places in Iceland. In summer it is a favourite area for campers

The road to Akureyri, Iceland's second-largest town, wheels eastward along the north coast, past the blue peaks of Waterdale, to where in the green valley of Skagafjördhur sleep now the farm and little church of Flugumyri, a picture of pastoral tranquillity. Yet here, in 1253, befell perhaps the ghastliest of all Icelandic burnings.

In one of the senseless personal feuds of that growing anarchy which only nine years later brought Iceland under the heel of Norway, fifty armed men surprised at Flugumyri the ambitious Gizur Thorvaldsson, just after the feast he had made for his son's marriage with Ingibjörg Sturlasdottir. Though twenty-five of the wedding party perished by sword or fire, including his own wife and son, Gizur himself escaped by hiding in the dairy, in a vat of freezing whey, but his belly and hands were gashed by the murderers' prodding spears that the submerged fugitive staved softly aside. Until they entered, he had been shivering with cold; but then he shivered no more. How graphic in their touches of realism these grim old tales remain!

Far away on the southern coast, at Hlitharendi, a young Icelandic lady made nothing of climbing ten minutes in her high-heeled shoes to show me Gunnar's grave. Attacked in his home, alone with wife and mother, he defended himself with deadly marksmanship. But his bowstring was cut. To replace it he called to his wife Hallgerda, whose spiteful pride had brought the whole blood-feud upon him, for a tress of her long hair. 'Well,' she says, 'now I call to mind how once you slapped my face; and I care not whether you hold out a long while or a short.' 'Every man has his own pride,' he answers. 'I will not ask again.' That was the end.

It will be seen that Icelanders are tenacious of the past. Even their children can still read the sagas in the original form, so little has the language changed from the Old Norse of the first settlers. Despite oppression, pestilences, climatic calamities and over a hundred volcanic eruptions (so that in 1783 the population had sunk to 38,000), this unconquerable race has kept almost unaltered its ancestral tongue. It is as if one small town had preserved its special speech a thousand years. Even today Icelandic rejects the international coinages of modern tongues. Electricity is 'amber-power'; a tank is a 'creeping dragon'. Even today surnames are

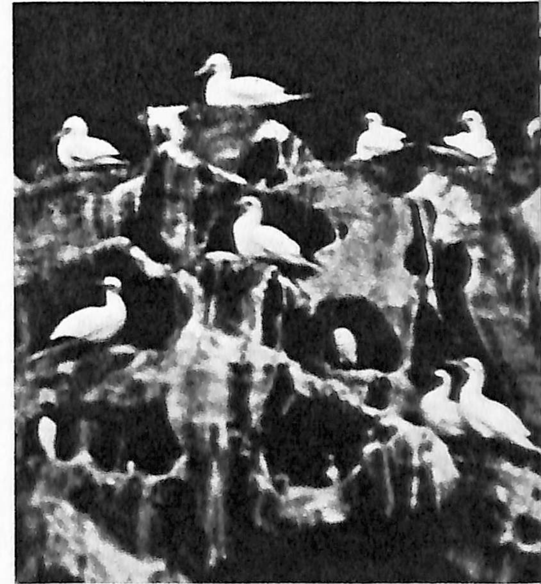
disapproved; the daughter of Gudmund Jonsson will remain till her death Thorgerda Gudmundsdottir, no matter how often she may marry.

But though so mindful of its past this shrewd and vigorous people grasps firmly at the future. The population has almost tripled, to 190,000, since 1890; there are abundant telephones and cars (though the roads are still mostly gravel); and some twenty places are linked with the capital by air.

The farms are still often scattered and lonely; but today they are bright with new paint, and humming with new machines. The picturesque gabled buildings of wood, stones and turf, which once housed men and animals, then animals alone, have almost disappeared. At intervals there rises in the wilderness some spacious school or college; for this small country spends heavily on education (though some of its educators feel they might be better paid). Iceland has always kept a tradition of intelligence, from the days when her first generations were an *élite* who provided most of the bards at the court of Norway, as well as men of learning and historians.

Today the number of books published for this minute public is said to be seven times as large per head as in England, nearly twenty-seven times as large as in the United States. (How *do* they pay?) The Icelandic writer and Nobel Prize-winner, Halldor Laxness, lecturing to a hundred listeners in north-east Iceland, found that half of them were poets; some already in print.

Again, whereas in 1850 the whole country had only seven doctors, and even in 1900 only one dentist, it now possesses a National Health Service and over fifty hospitals. One sees few signs of wealth, few of poverty. The standard of living is reported to be among the highest, the infant-mortality among the lowest, in all Europe.



Gannets perch on a guano-whitened cliff. Iceland is rich in bird life, and about 200 species, many of them migrants, have been identified there. Sea-birds, including waterfowl and waders, are among the most abundant native species. Iceland's only game bird is the ptarmigan

The traveller who disembarks at Reykjavik sees at first little that differs from many another Scandinavian port. The summer day seems endlessly long, and distinctly cool, with a bracing stimulus in its air that some at first find overpowering. But there is no sense of being next door to the Arctic. And in fact, though Iceland lies in the chilly latitude of Russian Archangel and Central Alaska, the winters are milder than in most of New York State, with little difference in the duration of snow-cover. Indeed, much of Sweden is far colder, so generous of its warmth is the Gulf Stream. True, the winter days must be depressingly short; the interior plateau, with an average height of 2,000-3,000 feet, must then be hideously bleak; and Icelandic snow-storms can be grim, so that of victims who perished in them, it used to be thought enough to say, with sinister brevity, 'He was *out*.'

A print of 1836 shows Reykjavik as a mere hamlet of wooden shanties. Even in 1900 its population was only 3,000, in contrast to the 78,000 of today. And even today the stranger walking from the quay into the capital may feel at first as if transported back into Victorian provincialism—dull perhaps, yet reassuringly tranquil compared with our own hectic age. He finds the sky blessedly smokeless; for Reykjavik is now mainly warmed by volcanic water pumped from ten miles away into cylindrical cement tanks, like small gasometers, on a hilltop to eastward. No horses, no dogs, no trams, no trains; but a flow of cars with most cosmopolitan origins—American, British, German, French, Italian, Swedish. Significantly, some are even Russian. No flamboyant restaurants, no vast alluring stores (though, typically, some excellent bookshops). The people seem dressed much like people

everywhere else in our monotonously standardized world. But one may notice that, in this land of chilly summers, they are, though often vigorous, real 'pale-faces'. Even the young women have not yet adopted the modern mode of giving themselves, by art, the complexions of tan shoes. Only occasionally does one see a dignified matron in the old national dress—black skirt, black bodice with gold or silver embroidery, and a black cap from beneath which fall two braids of twisted hair, and a long tassel bound with a ring of silver or gold.

The older Reykjavik, then, has a simple atmosphere; not beautiful—what architect would work by choice in a mixture of wood, cement, and corrugated iron however liberally enlivened with red and green paint?—yet with a certain quaint charm in its main square, where rises the flower-girt statue of Jón Sigurdsson, who led the struggle for independence; in the tiny stone Parliament House (one of the few stone buildings in Iceland); in the tiny Lutheran Cathedral. Icelanders have a passion for sculpture; and one of the few things the traveller sees to suggest that he is in a capital, not a mere country town, is the profusion of statues, partly tenth-century Vikings, partly nineteenth-century worthies in trousers. The Vikings have a certain impressiveness; the nineteenth-century worthies have not.

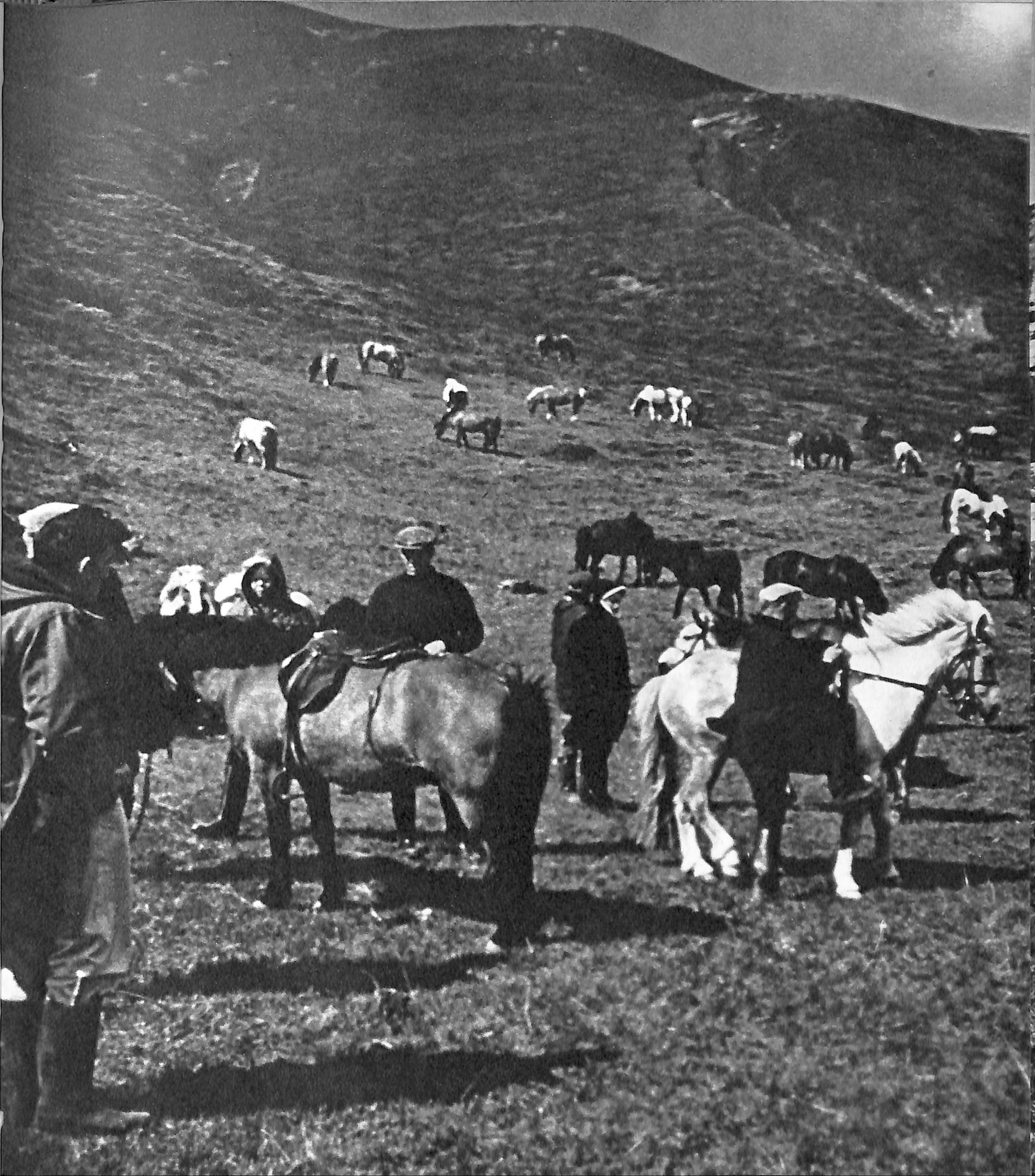
Beyond the small main square one comes unexpectedly on a duck-haunted lake, 500 yards long, with the green-painted Free Church in corrugated iron on one side, and beyond it a quiet public garden, peopled by yet more statues.

Such is the old town, with an air of old-world sedateness, even rusticity. But all around it, to east and south and west, in a riot of building sprawling rather wastefully over the hills, or mushrooming into the inevitable skyscrapers, erupts the new Reykjavik. There are new museums, libraries, government buildings, swimming-baths. And here, as elsewhere in Iceland, church architecture is in the very van of modernism, with creations of the weirdest shape. As for dwellings, there are streets where inventiveness breaks out in every form of fantasy, sometimes good, more often odd.

If the capital seems something of a grey glow-worm by day, with the grey clouds raking Esja, above the grey sea-wastes of the Faxaflói, still by night the glow-worm brightens. As the planes home through the dusk and the lights shine out, white, red and green, above statued gardens and highways, Reykjavik comes to look almost like a continental city.

What remains at the end of a stay in Iceland? Memories of people reserved, yet intelligent and kindly; of their bright, yellow-haired children; of their patient, sagacious, graceful little ponies. Memories of a silence of infinite spaces that brings, not neurotic terrors, but only a heightened sense of the futility of much 'civilized' life, as it scurries frantically this way and that. Memories of desolation at its grimmest, but also of the mauve-and-yellow of wild flowers on the banks of desert streams; of the thunders of waterfall on waterfall, but also of little homesteads leaning happily against the hills, amid the vivid green of new-mown meadows. Memories of seas that change suddenly from sinister grey to a Mediterranean blue; of black mountains transmuted by the westering sunlight to an azure past belief; skies, bleaker indeed, but as enchanted as those that the winds off the Atlantic build above Kerry, or Connemara, or the Hebrides.

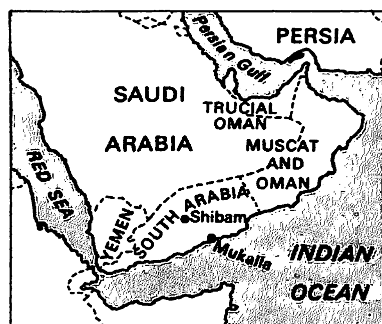
The people of Iceland are quiet and hardy. So are the ponies, which in autumn help to round up the vast flocks of sheep on the hills. Almost all the income for farmers comes from livestock, and mutton and wool are exported



JØRGEN BISCH

Desert skyscrapers

A hundred miles inland from the South Arabian port of Mukalla, in a fertile wadi near the wasteland of the Empty Quarter, stands the improbable city of Shibam. Its buildings are skyscrapers of sun-baked clay, towering up to twelve storeys high—in former times an impregnable defence against the marauding Bedouin of the desert



When you stand facing Shibam, in South Arabia, it seems a mystery that you did not see it first miles away, this colossus of a town whose houses are ten or twelve storeys high. But it is only when you have come through the wadi to the oasis of Shibam that it emerges, unexpectedly and preposterously, as though it had sprung from the ground that very moment. It is a little while before you realize that this miracle, too, has its explanation: the yellow, brown and white colours of the houses merge to such an extent with the sand and the surrounding mountains that in certain lights the town is almost invisible.

Shibam is in every way a fantastic town—a New York of the desert which existed centuries before New York was built (paradoxically, the name Shibam means 'young' or 'new'). Its houses rise from the sand in huge, rectangular blocks; it looks like hundreds of desert forts, and indeed every one of the buildings is in itself an almost impregnable fortress. Unlike many other Arab towns, Shibam has no town wall; but the massive outsides of the houses form a closed shell which it would be practically impossible for hostile Bedouin tribes to penetrate. The openings on to the outside world are embrasures and many feet high; only the upper storeys have real windows. The few gates form the only possible entrance to the town. The steep outside face of the buildings, looking towards the desert, is supported below by a sloping wall, or by buttresses; and though all these tall houses are built of sun-baked clay and not of concrete, they appear more solid than the skyscrapers of New York.

There is good reason why each of these houses, both in Shibam itself and in the oasis, should be a separate stronghold, for in times past many feuds have raged hereabouts. Tribe fought with tribe, family against family; one had to entrench oneself in order to survive. When an enemy attacked, it was safest for the men of the town to stay indoors until they had gauged their opponents' fighting power and could launch a counter-offensive. The women, however, were free to move outside the houses, for it is an old Arab rule that women can never be attacked. So they could go out in safety to the wells in the oasis to fetch water, and generally ensure that their men got the necessary provisions while the siege lasted.

The streets are very narrow; walking through them you feel as if you were at the

bottom of a deep ravine into which the sun cannot penetrate—except for the few minutes around noon when it is so high that its rays are almost vertical. As soon as you enter the great Cedad Shibam gate from the desert you are struck by the fact that there is no rational system in the streets, which form the oddest angles and make the most unexpected twists and turns. None of the builders has ever known anything about town-planning. In a car you can just edge your way through the town gate to the square; but you quickly abandon the idea of a drive around town. For this the streets are too narrow; indeed at many points even pedestrians find difficulty in passing one another, and the high kerbs in the middle of the road also make wheeled traffic impossible.

The only artistic features of the ordinary dwelling-houses of Shibam are the massive front doors. These are frequently made of cedar—more rarely hewn out of palm trunks—and are ingeniously carved. The lock is remarkable for its extremely complicated mechanism, the 'key' being a kind of wooden comb which enables some catches to be raised for the bolt to be drawn. The window-frames are also carved, the windows themselves being so small that the face of anybody looking out will fill the whole aperture. Outside many windows of the upper floors, straw mats are hung up as sun blinds. At one place I saw a cord strung across the street between two buildings at eighth-storey level. By this means the occupants were able to exchange food, tobacco and other things.

Shibam is no more built on oasis ground than most other Arab towns, but is situated on a low ridge adjoining the oasis. The wells therefore lie outside the town. Only the mosque has a small well of its own, the water there being too holy to be put to profane use. So all day long a procession of women goes to and fro between the town and the wells, all of them dressed in blue. Here, as elsewhere in Arabia, it is the women who have to do all the rough work, making themselves useful as beasts of burden.

In the early hours of the morning the oasis outside Shibam will sometimes lie wrapped in a haze, not of humidity such as we know it at home, but of dust. In such a daybreak the mountains outside the town seem to vie in describing the most fantastic and fantastically coloured silhouettes against the light. Some of them will still be entirely black, but over towards the east the sun will have begun to give them a lighter shade, and the most distant easterly mountains will be so soft and faint in their outlines as to be barely distinguishable from the morning sky.

The oasis wakes up slowly. It is cool at this end of the day; but the sun soon gets a grip, and by half-past seven it is blazing at full strength across the mountain-sides. All at once the oasis becomes as lively as a cockroach that has been hit by the ray from a burning-glass. The herd-boys come running with their goats; others drive their sheep down the slopes. The flocks are so large they look like a vast stone slide coming down to the oasis from the mountain. One of them was being shepherded by a pretty fourteen-year-old girl; when I wanted to take a picture of her flock she turned on me indignantly, and I hurriedly had to explain that I was not photographing her.

Young girls came tripping in long black draperies; many of them already had their faces veiled. They were on their way to the wells or to the millet fields, where they started to drive off the persistent sparrows with their catapults. Then the creaking of the winches was heard at the wells, and the day had begun.



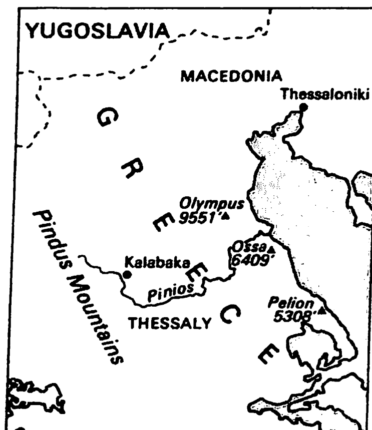


The skyscrapers of Shibam *top*, rising sheer from the South Arabian desert, and *bottom* the bustle of a square in the town. Shibam is one of the main towns of the Wadi Hadhramaut; it is a provincial capital of the Qa'iti State, and is believed to date back to the third century AD. It is built on a rocky outcrop in a valley liable to flooding, and this situation largely determined the building of the houses upwards rather than outwards. The population is about 7,500, engaged mainly in agriculture and commerce

PATRICK LEIGH FERMOR

Monastery of the air

Sheer from the plain of Thessaly, in the foothills of the Pindus Mountains, towers a cluster of astonishing rock pinnacles. On their summits, in the warring confusion of medieval and later centuries, Greek Orthodox monks took refuge in lofty seclusion of the Meteora monasteries



THE GREEK summer dies slowly. October was melting into November, but only the earlier dusk, the sudden mists, the chill mountain air and the conflagration of the beech trees had hinted, as we advanced from Macedonia down the eastern flank of the Pindus mountain range, that autumn and winter were on their way. Here, where the Pinios falls into the Thessalian plain and saunters off down its broad and pebbly bed, not a leaf had fallen from the plane trees. Behind us climbed the Pindus, the road branching steeply westwards; but to the east the Thessalian plain expanded from the mountain's foot as smoothly as an inland sea, its distant shores of Olympus and Ossa and Pelion invisible in the early autumn haze.

In the flurry of impending arrival in the village of Kalabaka the Meteora monasteries went almost unnoticed. Only when we were nearly in the streets of Kalabaka did we gaze up at the tremendous spikes and cylinders of rock that soared for perpendicular hundreds of feet into the sky. There was nothing to halt the upward path of the eye, except, here and there, an irrelevant tuft of vegetation curling from the rock-face on a single stalk; or the straight damp smear of some spring's overflow, shining like a snail's track from the eagle-haunted regions to the outskirts of the grovelling village. One immense drum of stone ascended immediately overhead. Behind, separated by leaf-filled valleys, the pillars and stalagmites retreated in demented confusion, rising, curling and leaning, tapering to precarious isolated pedestals (on the summit of one of which the wall and the belfry of a monastery, minute and foreshortened, could just be discerned) or swelling and gathering like silent mammoths halted in meditation on the tundra's edge.

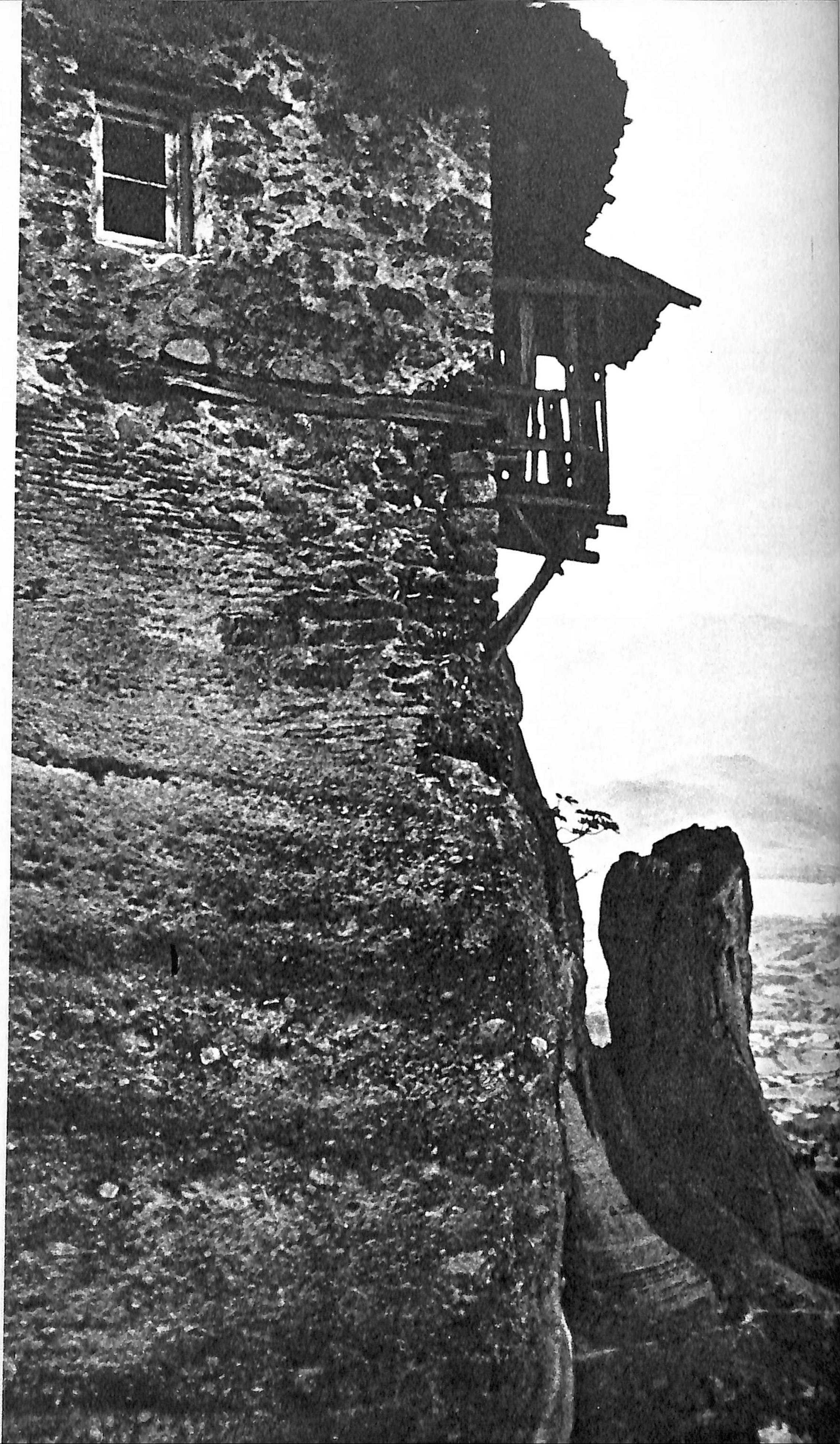
We gazed upwards in silence for a long time. The streets were a moving tide of sheep making the month-long journey from the summer villages in the Pindus to their winter pastures in Thessaly, and the air was full of golden dust and 'baa's' and shouted greetings in the strange Latin dialect of the black-clad shepherds. Through the assembly of homespun cloaks and whiskers and crooks and the fleecy turmoil, a tall monk advanced. He was a head and shoulders taller than anyone else, and his high cylindrical hat increased his height to the stature of a

The Monastery of St. Barlaam, built at the top of the almost vertical rock face. There were originally twenty-four monasteries, of which only half a dozen now remain



POISED OVER SPACE

The entry platform to one of the monasteries, built out over empty space. Originally visitors were drawn up in a net attached to a rope and windlass, though access is now by steps and causeways. A former traveller described his arrival as follows: 'A gentle upward motion then begins, the net twists slowly round and round, the traveller, as the sides of his cage contract, is gently shaken into a ball, and, except for a strange sensation of absolute helplessness, the ascent is not otherwise than agreeable. On reaching the level of the platform the net is fished in by means of a hooked pole, its inmate, still rolled up in a ball, is tumbled on to the floor, the meshes are detached from the hook, and the traveller is cut free'





giant. 'There you are,' the driver said. 'There's Father Christopher, the Abbot of St. Barlaam.'

Could we stay at his monastery for the night? Of course we could, or for two or three. His assent was underlined by a friendly blow on the shoulder and a smile on that long saturnine face that radiated the wiry strands of his beard in a bristling fan. Half an hour later we were advancing westwards on either side of his mare. A satchel of provisions hung from one side of the saddle bow, a wicker-caged demijohn of wine from the other. In the middle, loose and easy in the saddle, puffing on his short pipe, talking, or quietly humming to himself, rode the hospitable abbot. The greetings of passing peasants, as we ambled westwards, prompted a response of humorous and squire-ish banter or an occasional mock-threatening flourish or a jovial prod with his great stick. The shadows in the astonishing rocks were broadening, and all, in the next village, Kastraki, was mellow and golden. Then the last houses fell behind, and a deep gorge opened before us, which dwindled and climbed along a chasm between the mountains. The white walls of the Monastery of the Transfiguration appeared on a ledge far overhead and, soon, the outline of St. Baarlam. My heart sank at the height and the distance. It seemed impossible that we should ever reach that eagle's nest.

At that moment, the sun dipped below the serrated edge of the Pindus. The mountains ahead turned grey-blue and cold and threatening and sad, and every trace of cheer seemed to die from the world.

As night fell, the road insensibly climbed. At the foot of the rock of St. Barlaam, a great square chasm, choked with undergrowth and rock, disappeared into the mountainside. 'The cave of the dragon,' the abbot said, pointing through the dusk, with a quiet and slightly grating laugh, 'safely stowed away under the monastery.' The road turned into a narrow flagged ascent between overpowering volumes of rock, winding among boulders and twisted plane trees and opening at last into a slanting world from which all glimpse of the plain was locked out. But a turn of the path led from our labyrinth into the most brilliant moonlight, and the mountains were suddenly robbed of their menace and their weight. All was silver and light and magical and miraculously silent. The plane trees were as still as the gleaming precipices themselves, as though each leaf had been rolled out of precious metal and beaten thin and then wired to the silver branches.

Fathoms above, the reception platform of St. Barlaam and the jutting tiles of its eaved penthouse projected into the moonlight in a galleon's poop, from which, like an anchor at the end of its cable, a great hook hung. The smooth sides of the cliff were not only perpendicular, but at many points they curved outwards and overhung their base, as naked of projection or foothold as the glass mountain in a fairy tale. High in the void, the monastery overflowed its monolithic pedestal in a circle of jutting walls and eaves and storeys.

The abbot drew rein and let out a roar. The echoing syllables of the name 'Bessarion!' dwindled and died down the valley. High above, on the ledge of the monastery, a pale spectacled face peered over the bar of the penthouse and a faint greeting came sailing down. 'Let down the rope and come and look after the mare,' the abbot's voice boomed up. The hook, taking two minutes on the way, revolved down to us as the thick steel cable was paid out. This, until steps were cut in 1932, was the only way into the monastery. In those days, the traveller squatted in a net

whose topmost meshes were hitched over the hook, which then floated gently into the air and, revolving and unwinding on itself, was slowly hauled up to the platform on a winch. The net, on its arrival, was fished in with a hooked pole and lowered to the boards. The traveller was then released. In the past century a rope as thick as a man's wrist was used. Answering the query how often it was changed, a former abbot is reported to have said: 'Only when it breaks. . . .'

The Deacon Bessarion, breathless from his run down the steps, helped the abbot secure the luggage and supplies to the hook, unsaddled the mare, and led her off to the stable on the flank of the opposing rock, joining us then in the long climb. The staircase twisted back on itself again and again under the overshadowing rock from which it had been hollowed, and brought us at last, panting and tired, to a heavy iron doorway. This opened, through a hole, into a dark stepped grotto through the heart of the rock. We rose at last into a courtyard of the monastery which was only divided from the gulf by a low stone wall. A spacious loggia, paved with square black and white slabs, at the top of another short ascent, had been built out at a recent date from the Byzantine brickwork of the monastery. A cypress tree, stooping in the wind, miraculously flourished there. The tiles and the cupolas of the church in the light of the moon, the patina and disorder of the monastic buildings, looked domestic and human after the chaos of rock through which we had come up.

Turning round, the abbot opened his hands in an ample gesture of welcome. Then, leaning over the rail of a penthouse which shook with every gust of wind while Father Bessarion toiled at the windlass, we watched the burdened hook ascending. The luggage, the saddle and the demijohn were safely unloaded on the planks. Leading us into the chapel, the abbot lit a taper at the sanctuary lamp and the gold and silver of the iconostasis and the innumerable haloes of frescoed saints twinkled among the shadows. Making the sign of the cross and kissing the main icons, the abbot and Father Bessarion retired. We followed them out into the moonlit yard. There was nobody about and no lights in the windows. The buildings appeared aloof and spellbound.

In the golden lamplit guest-room, human and welcoming, Father Bessarion was soon cutting up apples and goat's cheese for an *hors-d'oeuvre* to accompany the ouzo with which the abbot replenished the little glasses the moment they were emptied; and when we sat down together to a frugal supper of beans, the great demijohn was uncorked. By the time the two monks were lighting their pipes, we were thick in conversation about the war and the problems of Greece and the decay of Orthodox Monasticism. They made an interesting contrast–the shy, diminutive Bessarion with his ragged cassock and soft skull-cap, the eager benignity of his eyes behind thick lenses, and the abbot's great stature, his shrewd and humorous glance, the lean sardonic features repeated on the wall in a gigantic shadow embowered in clouds of smoke. A thread of raciness and wordly-wisdom ran through his discourse. His family had been priests in Kalabaka for centuries.

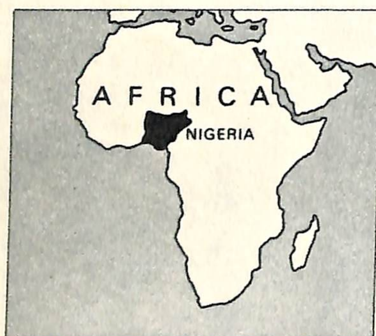
From the bed in my whitewashed room I could, when the wind dropped, hear the deep level breathing of the sleeping abbot in the room next door and, occasionally, a sigh of contentment. Then the wind began to moan once more round our tapering mattress of rock. Outside, the moon rimmed the tiled cupolas of the church, filling the empty slanting leagues that ran southward from these columnar mountains with a pale and glimmering lustre.

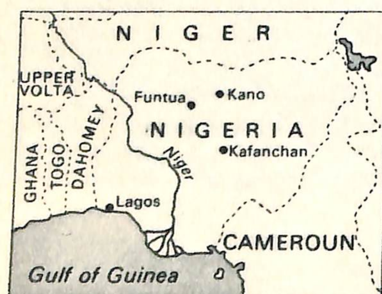


The monastic life has always had a powerful hold on the Orthodox church. In Greece it found its main expression in the monasteries of Mount Athos, with the Meteora as the second largest concentration. Few monks remain in the Meteora; those who do are mainly curators of the sacred buildings

Nigeria's northern face

The thirteen provinces of Northern Nigeria make up an enormous tapestry of different races—Hausas, Yorubas and Fulanis among them. Modern cities like the capital, Kaduna, exist side by side with villages linked only by tracks through the bush, and traditional crafts live on with the latest industries



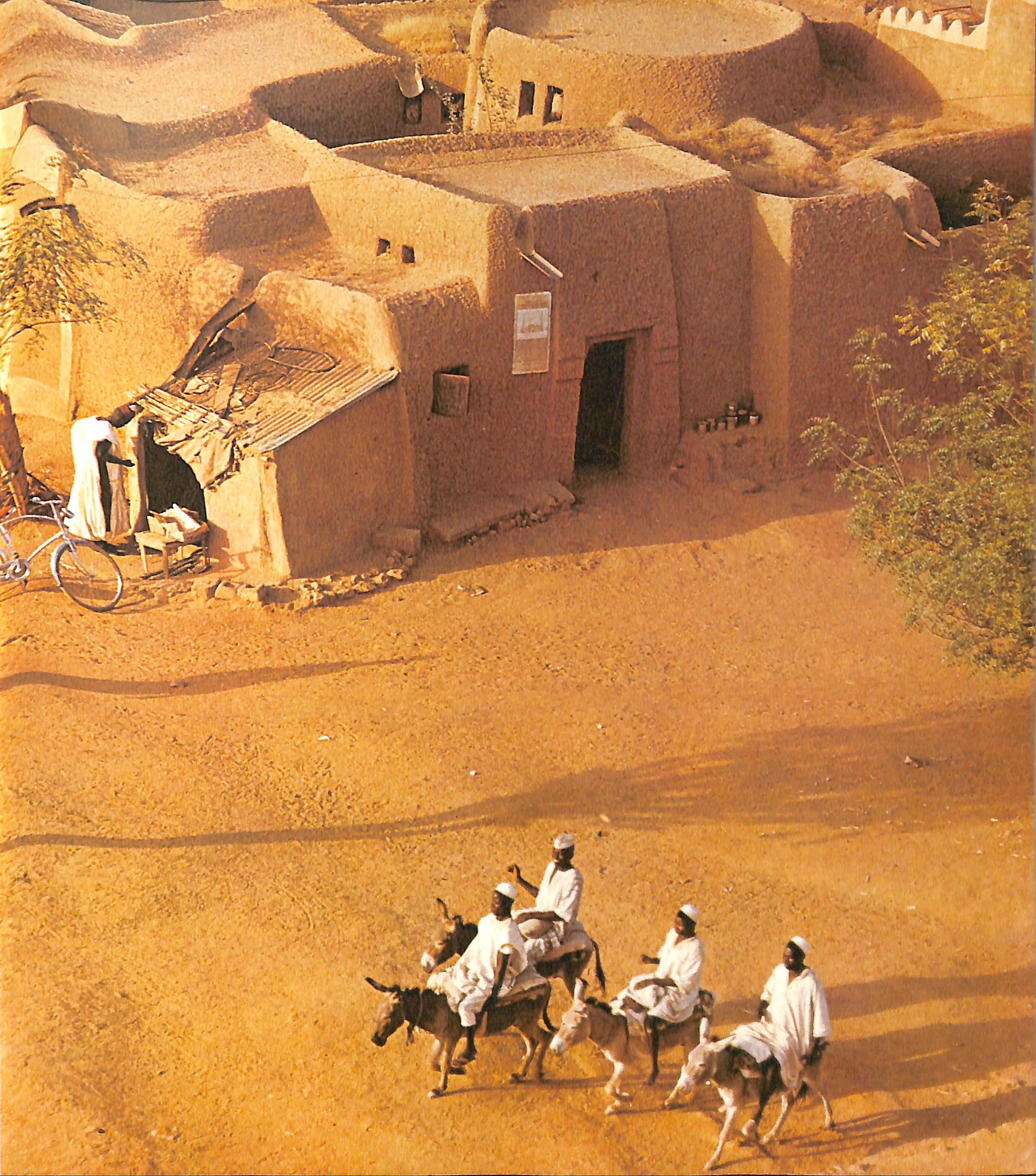






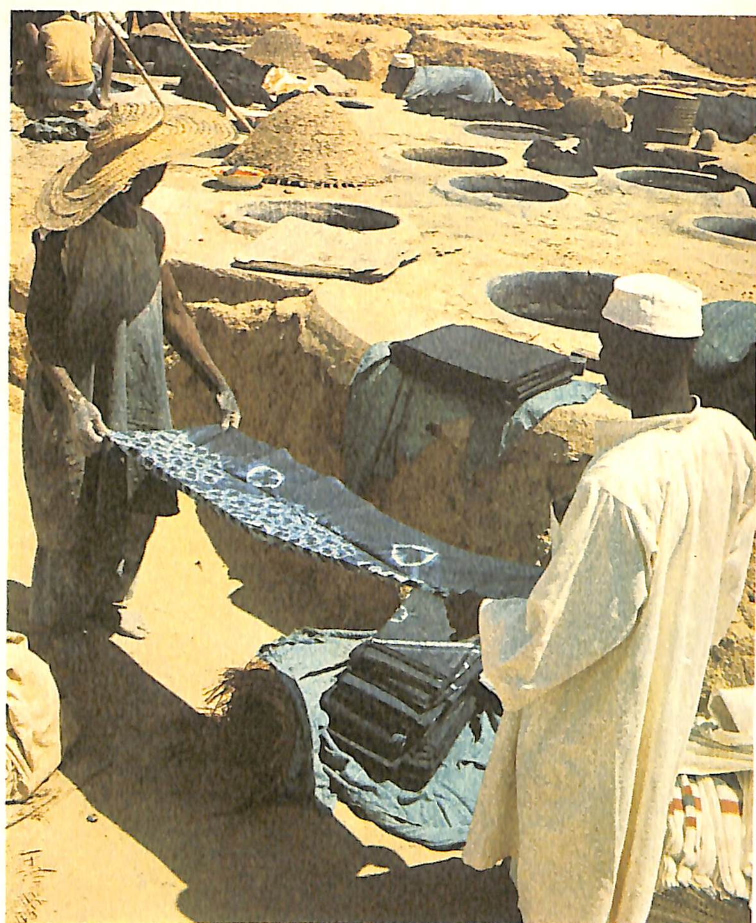
Racial types of the Northern Region: a girl from Kafanchan, and an old man from Funtua

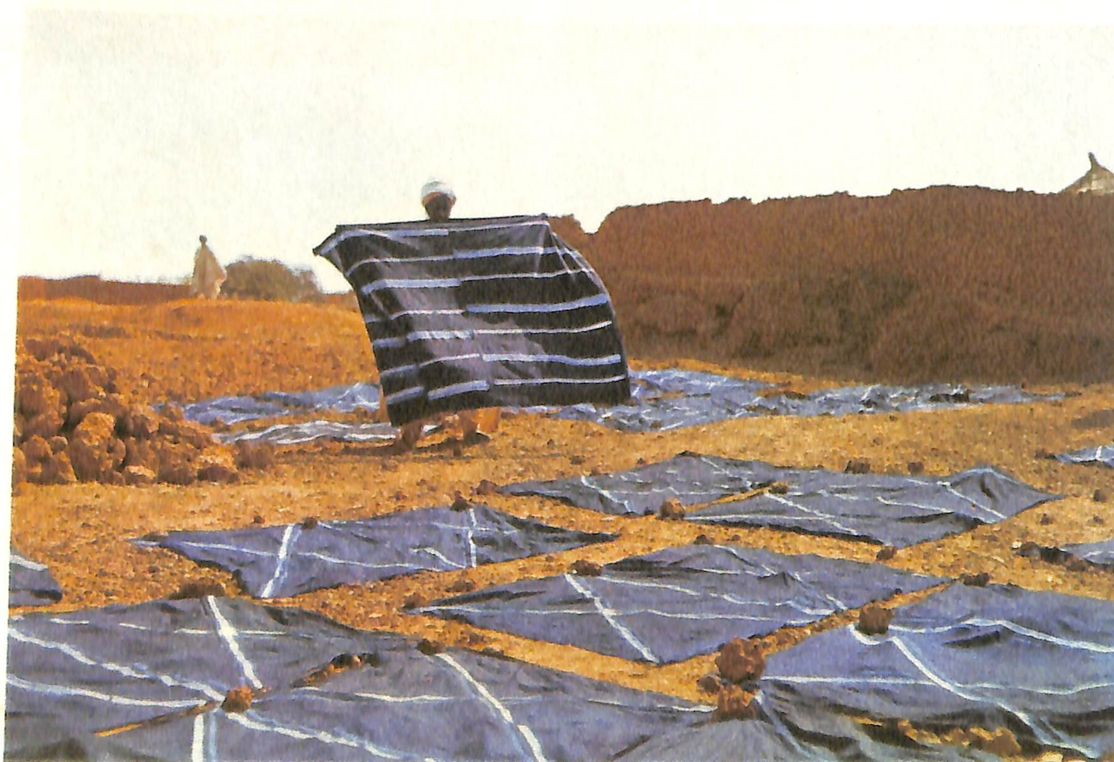
Houses in the Muslim walled city of Kano, the capital of Kano Province which has a population of nearly 6 million. Kano is an Emirate, and was a powerful organized state when the British first arrived in the country in the 1880s. A link with the old days is provided by the Emir's trumpeter, who blows a fanfare when aircraft arrive at Kano's international airport. In former times the trumpeter used to announce the arrival of camel trains from the north. The main crop of the province is groundnuts, stored in giant pyramids of sacks. Other staple crops are millet, cotton and cassava; hides and skins are also an important source of income



The dyeing pits of Kano



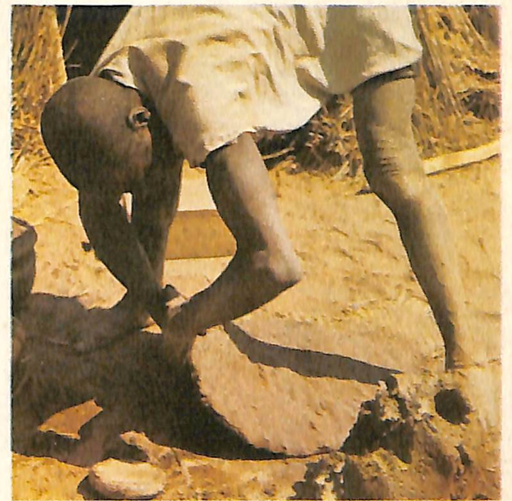


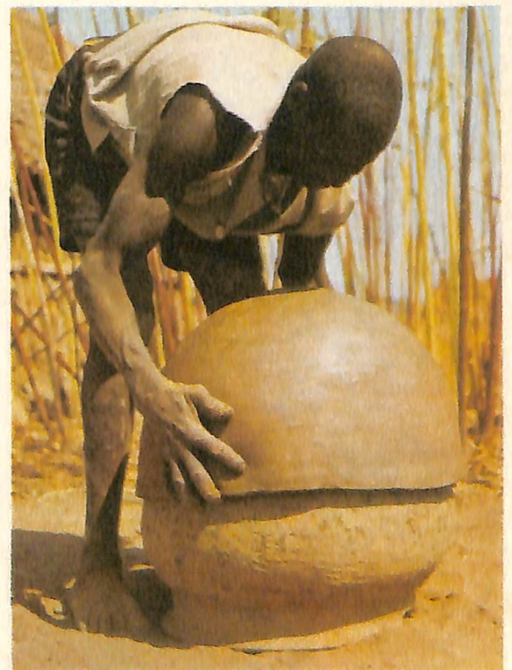


Kano produces its own characteristically dyed cloth, in traditional patterns. The dyeing pits, fifteen feet deep, are cut into solid rock. The unbleached cotton *top left* is dyed in pure vegetable indigo, mixed with cold water. White stripes *left* are produced by tacking down folds in the material so that the dye does not penetrate. More complex decoration *above* is produced by the same technique as the Javanese *batik*: the pattern is marked out in wax, so that the dye runs off, leaving an intricate design in white

Potters of Funtua

Funtua is a centre for the manufacture of the water-pots that the women of Northern Nigeria carry so gracefully on their heads. Donkeys bring the clay from pits some miles away. The pictures below show the way in which the pots are made. A pancake of clay is kneaded to the right size, and is shaped over a mould of mushroom form. The sun dries it to a leathery consistency, and it is then fired in kiln huts at a low temperature, becoming a rich brick-red. The completed pots *left* cost only a few shillings. The porosity of the clay allows transpiration, and keeps the water cool. Pots for cooking and grain storage are also made

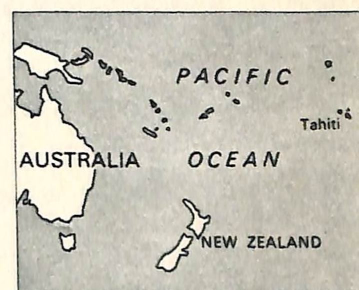


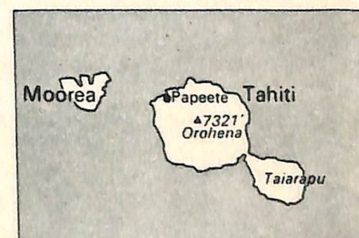




Only in Tahiti

For two centuries the island of Tahiti has exercised a magical power over the minds of men. All the lure of the South Pacific is summed up in its name—the lure that captivated artists like Gauguin and writers like Stevenson, and can still sway the world-weary traveller of today





'Only in Tahiti . . .' I began thinking this at the very moment of my arrival. As my boat pulled into dock, a group of French-shouting Chinese water-skiers sported in the lagoon around us. Along the *quai* sped a motor scooter carrying a man, a woman, a baby and a live pig. And on the kerb near by sat a classically ragged and whiskered tramp holding a gold-capped bottle of champagne.

Then came my first evening, and dinner at the rooftop restaurant of Papeete's Grand Hotel. The bounties that appeared were enough to make eyes pop and stomach gurgle. In a gourmand's trance I dined on *pâté Strasbourg, langouste (avec Chablis), Chateaubriand et artichaut (avec Pommard), camembert, et café (avec cognac)*. And the trance was made no less euphoric by the fact that I was served by a Tahitian vahine with golden skin, waist-length black hair, and a yellow hibiscus behind each ear. As I sipped my cognac she sat down beside me, introduced herself as Louise, and enquired if I had enjoyed my meal. It had been the climax of my life, I assured her. . . . And now that it was over, what were my plans for the evening? Well—er—they were a bit vague. In fact I had no plans. . . . 'So we go dancing at Quinn's,' said Louise. And we went dancing at Quinn's.

Some dreams are private, one's very own. Others are in the public domain. Over the past few centuries in our Western world, none had beguiled the minds of men more potently than the Dream of the South Seas; and, within the larger dream, the heart, the essence has been the island to which I now had come. I am well aware that I am neither the first nor the tenth nor the ten thousandth traveller to say, 'Only in Tahiti—'

Almost two centuries ago its first European visitors—the men who sailed with Wallis, Bougainville, and Cook—came and landed and looked about them, and were never again quite the same for the experience. Its charms, feminine and otherwise, were the direct cause (with slight assistance from Captain Bligh) of the mutiny on the *Bounty*. And through all the years since Tahiti has had a magical lure for generations of bemused pilgrims. In early days it was the haven *de luxe* for ship-jumping sailors and whalers—and, on the other face of the coin, the toughest

A cascade of black hair beside a cascading waterfall: a Tahitian vahine, wearing a tiara of white gardenias, dries herself in the sun

challenge a missionary could meet this side of the Day of Judgment. Even Charles Darwin—scarcely a romantic escapist—who came to Tahiti as a young scientist on the world-circling *Beagle,* conceded that it 'must ever remain classical to the voyager in the South Seas'. And here the ghosts of writers—Melville and Stevenson, Pierre Loti and Rupert Brooke—swarmed thicker than anywhere else in the Pacific. There have been painters by the hundred: among them, toweringly, Gauguin. There have been tycoons with their yachts, playboys with their neuroses, film stars with their mistresses, rebel youngsters and sated sybarites, would-be saints and *de facto* con men, rich and poor, plain and fancy, from every corner of the earth—to the point where the very name Tahiti has become globally synonymous with Romance and Escape.

The land mass of Tahiti consists of two rugged, long-extinct volcanic cones, joined by a narrow isthmus to form a figure-of-eight. The larger loop is Tahiti proper, the smaller the peninsula of Taiarapu, or Little Tahiti, and together they comprise an area of just over 400 square miles. The total population is well over 50,000, of which about half lives in the capital—and only—town of Papeete, on the north-west shore of Big Tahiti, with the rest scattered along the belt of level coastal land that encircles the island. The interior is deserted: an almost trackless wilderness of peaks and valleys, crags and gorges and plunging waterfalls, all deeply festooned by lush tropical growth. And a trip across it is rugged going. The highest point, Mount Orohena (7,339 feet), was not climbed until 1953—the same year as Everest. And few visitors to Tahiti catch even a glimpse of it: for even while the coasts are flooded with sunlight, the uplands remain almost always shrouded in great tiers of cloud.

It is not upward and inward that Tahiti looks, but outward to the sea. And its seascapes are dazzling in their loveliness. Only the beaches—as on so many Pacific islands—are apt to be disappointing to the visitor; for they are neither numerous nor well cared for, and on most the sand is dark brown or black. But all the rest is a prismatic dream: the gleaming emerald of the shore line; the lighter green of the lagoon, darkening, turning to azure and then sapphire blue as it deepens seaward; the white frieze of breakers on the girdling reef; and beyond the reef, nine miles across the shining water from the north-west coast, the neighbouring island of Moorea thrusting its incredible silhouette of dome and spire—now green, now purple, now black, now sunset red—into the ocean sky.

As with the sea, so with the land itself. A circuit of the island, along its ninety miles of twisting coastal road, is a journey through a tropical Land of Oz. On either side, always, are the immensities of mountain and ocean; but here on the narrow strip between them everything is small, soft, gentle, intimate. Palm trees are everywhere, their plumes nodding gently seaward. And among them mango and breadfruit, avocado and pandanus, banana and bamboo and casuarina, in prodigal profusion. In the low damp places are taro patches; on firmer ground rows of coffee and vanilla bushes. For a while, as you move on, the scent of vanilla fills the air. Then the scent of copra. Then—more enduringly—the scent of flowers. And always in your eyes there is the brilliance of the flowers: hibiscus, bougainvillea, frangipani, gardenia, and the island's own fabled *tiare Tahiti.*

For the conscientious, there is also, of course, a generous spate of sights—the ruins of ancient temples, or the landing places of explorers. But *l'ambiance*

Tahitienne is notoriously hostile to conscientiousness, and the average wayfarer will find himself considerably more involved in the here-and-now life about him. For almost every Pacific island is lavish in history, as it is in beauty; but the life, the *ambiance*, of Tahiti is its very own. You feel it even in the country, in the villages of bamboo and thatch (or plank and tin), where the roosters can hardly be heard over the thump of guitars and the click of billiard balls. In the ancient buses, jam-packed to—and on—the roofs with brown bodies, smiling faces, squealing pigs, and flapping fowls. In the girls in shorts and halters, on motor bikes and scooters, whizzing past, with long hair streaming behind them. In the multiplication of bikes and scooters—plus buses and trucks and sports cars—until, as you approach Papeete, you are in a traffic jam worthy of Paris.

Papeete—pronounced 'Pap-ay-ay-tay'—is Tahiti's heart and centre, the focus of its present, the key to its future. It hums and throbs, and often positively jerks, with animation. Certainly its waterfront is one of the sights of the world: the only harbour I know of in which liners and freighters—not to mention schooners and yachts, ferries and fishing boats—tie up directly along the main street of the town. On the inland side of the *quais* are the mercantile houses, the major shops, shipping and tourist offices, cafés and restaurants, all of them seeming to be crowded all the time. And behind them the smaller shops, almost a hundred per cent Chinese, fan out in confused array along the labyrinthine back streets. Everywhere there are buyers, sellers, sightseers, loungers, forests of parked motor bikes, and hordes of unparked ones plunging around corners. Except for the seafront, it is an ugly town. A nondescript, ramshackle, decrepit town. But you will not find a livelier one between Paris and San Francisco.

Other South Pacific centres close down completely at nightfall: but here Papeete is even more the exception than by day. The lights go on. The music starts. The swarm of bikes grows even thicker. While I was there the island's leading hotel had dancing on an average of four evenings a week; and in the bars every night was Saturday night, with all the stops out.

Of all the world's people, I think, the Tahitian is the prime apostle of the Good Time, and his dedication to its pursuit is something awesome to see. When he sits down to a feast it is with a gusto and capacity that would put a Roman emperor to shame. When he drinks it's bottoms up, and not just for the glass but the bottle. Give him (or her) a guitar, and he will strum and sing until its strings break; or set him dancing, and he may or may not stop for a late breakfast. Perhaps the favourite of all activities are picnics and round-the-island tours. And such junkets, awash in beer, flowered garlands, music, and laughter, can assume epic proportions.

In the interests of accuracy it must be admitted that not *all* Tahitians are on a spree *all* the time. The very young and very old are the most notable exceptions, and even those in between will occasionally be found at other pursuits. Within reason, that is. Work of the slogging day-in-day-out variety is left almost wholly to the Chinese, who, like the Indians in Fiji, were brought in a century ago as plantation labourers, and have—at a handsome profit—kept the wheels turning ever since. The Tahitian is not interested in profit. When he works, it is at something that not only needs doing but that he enjoys doing: at fishing, for instance, at building a house or canoe, at sailing a ship or driving a nice big noisy truck.

THE PALM-FRINGED SHORE OF TAHITI

Of all the races in the Pacific, the Tahitians know best how to enjoy themselves. Tahiti was settled by the Polynesians probably during the Middle Ages, and it was not until 1767 that the first white men set foot on the island: Samuel Wallis was followed by Captain Cook, and then by Bligh and the *Bounty*. But English influence was never strong on Tahiti. Since a French protectorate was established in 1843, France has dominated the island, and the Gallic attitude to life has corresponded perfectly with the Polynesian's pleasure-loving nature





And his capacity for enjoyment—here as in his revels—is unique. On boat day at Papeete's docks the handling of baggage and freight resembled nothing so much as a lively basketball game. In a restaurant, my *amie* Louise and her sister waitresses were as likely as not to be practising a dance step as they brought your tray in from the kitchen.

One day, while I was in my seaside bungalow, a sharp squall blew up, and from the shrouded wind-lashed water I heard what I took to be shouts for help. But when, a few minutes later, a group of fishermen stumbled ashore dragging their capsized canoe, I found they were still shouting—with sheer delight at the excitement.



In Papeete, Tahiti's capital, life is lived to the full twenty-four hours a day. The vahines taking part in a torchlight procession will be back at work in the morning, behind shop counters or waiting at hotel tables

How does the Tahitian get like this? It is on the record that for some two hundred years he has been plundered, corrupted, and victimized by the white man; and there are those who contend that, beneath the surface, he is sad and lost, awash in a world he never made or asked for, and knowing himself doomed to racial extinction. But whatever his past and future, he gives, today, an impeccable performance as the happiest of men.

For this happiness, real or apparent, I would say there are three principal reasons, of which the first is the Tahitians themselves; for even in the days of the first Western explorers they were the most easy-going and pleasure-loving of the Pacific peoples. Second is the fact—not unrelated to the first—that the missions have never succeeded in dominating their lives, as they have those of other Polynesians, and that the white man's faiths, whether Protestant or Catholic, rest lightly on both their souls and habits. And third is the circumstance of history that gave their island to France.

Not that the French, over the years, have been a shining light of colonialism. But few—and they should have their heads examined—would argue that things would be better with British or American counterparts. The French are concerned with making money. They are concerned with international prestige and holding together their shreds of empire. But they are *not* concerned with private lives; with who drinks what, who sleeps with whom, and what time you go to bed at night, or in the morning. And these are what matter on the island.

Most important of all, there is no colour bar. True, 'colour' in golden-tan Tahiti is not the same thing as in black Melanesia or Africa, and there has been so much interbreeding—between native and French, native and Chinese, native or part native and almost every nationality in the almanac—that it is hard today to determine just what *is* a Tahitian and what isn't. But under British or Americans there would still, inevitably, be some form of racial distinction, whereas under the French there is none. Financial and professional status varies, as anywhere—including Russia and China. But social equality is absolute. During my term as escapist-in-residence, the lounge, dock, and terrace of Tahiti's leading hotel belonged as much to passing fishermen and stray children (not to mention stray cats) as they did to the paying guests. My taxi driver of one day could very well, on the next, be my host at a party. Six nights a week Louise waited at table at the Grand Hotel; but on the seventh, as likely as not, she was right back there sitting at table, while her escort ordered her *tournedos* with sauce Béarnaise.

Garlanded dancers sway to the traditional rhythms of Tahiti's music of the South Seas. The mixture of Polynesian, French and Chinese blood has produced some of the world's most seductive women



Of such things is the island's *ambiance* compounded: a blend of old ways and new ways, Tahitian and French, the languorously easy-going and the feverishly frenetic. And they add up to a world of marvellous charm and fascination—but not quite to paradise. For Tahiti, however remote, however 'special', is still part of a world in which a price must be paid for everything.

Strictly nonparadisaical, for instance, are its sloppiness and decrepitude; its rats and roaches and streets carpeted with squashed mangoes. And anyone under the unfortunate necessity of 'getting something done' will feel himself a lot farther from heaven than from its antipode. The management of one of the hotels was not singing the charms of Tahiti on the night of one of its 'galas' when two of its fourteen waitresses turned up—all the others having taken off on a beach picnic.

Nor was I, on a certain golden morning when I spent four traumatic hours making two phone calls, sending a cable, and cashing a cheque at the bank. The moment you left the lagoon or put down the guitar, the frustrations could mount to the ulcer point with horrid rapidity.

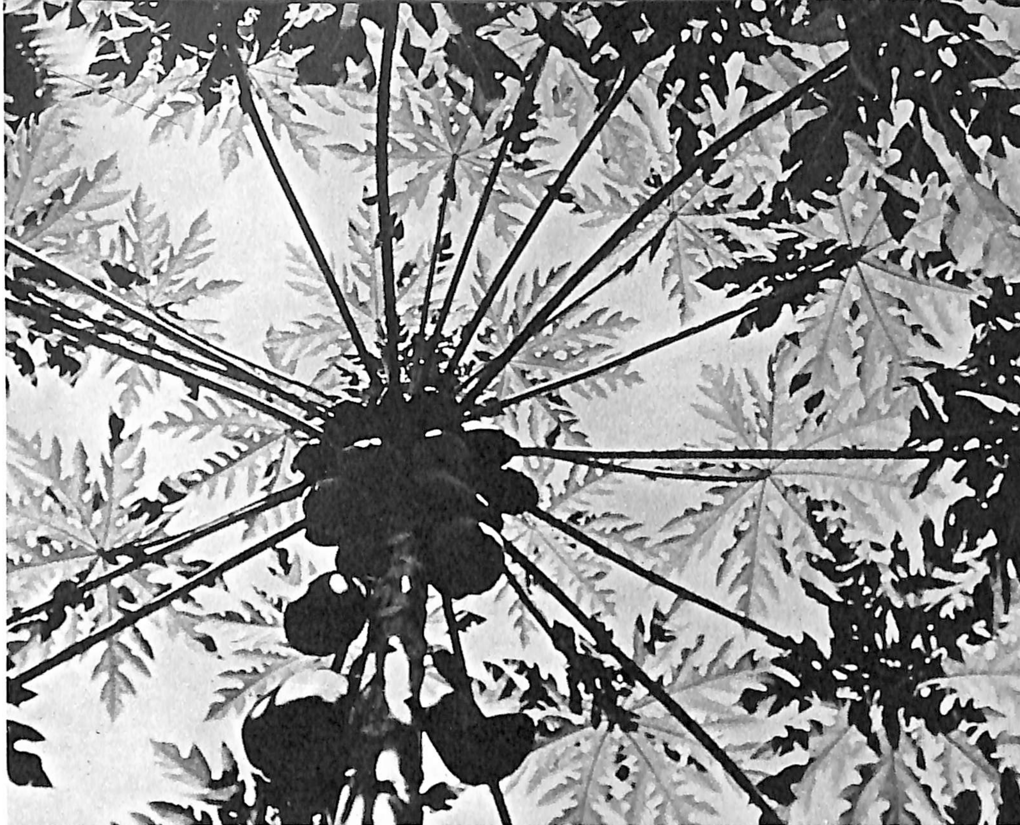
These, to be sure, are hazards only for the *popaa*—the white man. For the Tahitian there are other, and more serious problems: pre-eminently disease. The old island curse of filariasis/elephantiasis has by now been brought pretty well under control. But tuberculosis is rampant, as is venereal disease. And with the sale of liquor virtually uncontrolled, there is widespread drunkenness. The right-minded *popaa* is apt to have a bad conscience about all this, for he is well aware that it was he—or his forebears—who inflicted it on the island. But it is typical of the Tahitian that he wastes little time in self-sympathy. '*Aué*,' says he (*aué*—pronounced 'Ah-way'—being his all-purpose expletive), '*aué*, we would rather have the *maladies d'amour* than no *amour*, and rather the drunkenness than no drinks.'

A monument to his philosophy, no less than to deceased royalty, is the tomb of the island's last king, Pomare V, in the countryside near Papeete. Pomare drank himself to death. His favourite drink was Benedictine. So what more fitting—in Tahiti—than that atop the tomb there should be a king-sized replica of a Benedictine bottle, lovingly carved in coral stone?

So much has been written, for so long, about the Tahitian vahine that I hesitate to add the few words of a Johnny-come-lately. But no portrait of the island can fail to take note of her. Louise, Marie, Yvette, and their sisterhood are not mere incidentals in this never-never land. They are its *force majeure*, the very incarnation of the *ambiance* of Tahiti.

Physically they vary greatly; for the pure Polynesian is today a rare bird on the island, and, as likely as not, the so-called Tahitienne will have inherited a different racial strain from each of her four grandparents. Those of preponderantly native blood are apt to run to bulk and girth, to a degree rather forbidding to Western tastes.

But those of mixed ancestry—called *demis*—are usually far more delicate of frame and feature; and the half-Tahitian half-Chinese, in particular, are often (and I make the statement categorically) as beautiful as a woman can get. Fat or thin, however, beautiful or only middling, all—if they are short of the old-crone stage—have a quality of style. Whether in a Dior replica, a pareu with garlands,



Sun strikes through the feathery leaves of a papaya plant, grown for its fleshy fruit. Also grown on the island are mangoes, bananas, vanilla, sugar cane and coconuts

or blue jeans and their boy friend's sports shirt, I never once saw a vahine whom I would call a frump.

As for their well-known 'availability', the answer is that it's as advertised. But while the newcomer may be prepared for this, he is apt to be surprised by the sweetness and gentility that go with it. There are exceptions, of course. At Quinn's and along the wharfs on boat days there are girls as brassily professional as any whore in San Francisco or Marseilles. But these are a minority. Most are not brassy. And they are not whores. By their own lights they are thoroughly decent and self-respecting vahines. And it is their lights, not ours, that make the rule of the road in Tahiti.

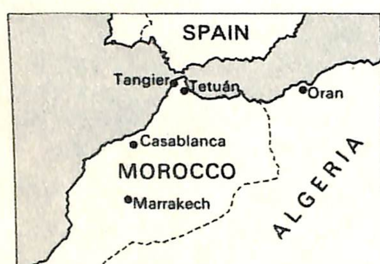
Aué, aué, te vahine Tahiti, goes the first line of the island's best-known song. And an echoing '*Aué!*' is about as coherent as the casual visitor, from Cook to Cook's Tourist, has been able to get. Her frontal assault (if she finds you *bien gentil*) will probably stagger you. Her giggle, when she is with others of her kind, will drive you crazy. But when she stops giggling and looks up at you, her eyes and smile will light up the Pacific night. One thing that is understood from the outset is that she is a woman, you are a man, and there is no nonsense about 'let's just be friends'. Her dancing—whether the classic otea, the wild tamure, or a pseudo-Western importation—will be, unabashedly, the best facsimile she can provide, perpendicular and clothed, of the act of love. When she plunks her guitar and sings, it will be of love. When she talks, it will be of love; and not romantically and vaguely, but in specific detail, as if she were discussing a new dress or recipe.

In conclusion, it must be added that one hears few complaints along the line of Mark Twain's: that everyone talks about the weather but no one does anything about it . . . In Tahiti—*aué*—it is otherwise.

NINA EPTON

Moroccan wedding

Morocco, the westernmost of the great Islamic powers, is a land of irresistible beauty. It is both European and African: its people are the descendants of the Moors who conquered Spain in the Middle Ages. Beggars stretch out their hands for alms beneath modern city skyscrapers, and in the countryside princes still live in feudal splendour



THE BROAD, bronze-studded door of the bridegroom's house in Tetuán was permanently ajar to allow for the continuous stream of guests come to congratulate their friend Taieb and to help him pass the long hours until it was time to fetch the bride. It was the first time I had seen a Moorish door remain ajar and unguarded for so long. These splendid doors are usually so secretive, so sternly reproachful to prying eyes eager to know what lies behind them. They possess immense and elaborate keyholes, made to their measure, but who would dare to risk being caught looking through them? For most of the time they remain as sharply closed as a portcullis in the grim wall of a fortress; when they open, it is only just a very little, and very reluctantly, to disclose a small servant in pigtails and wide pantaloons. After a brief, tantalizing glimpse of dark passages and glowing columns faced with coloured tiles, they close again silently with crustacean firmness. But on this particular night, the servants were too harassed to mount their customary guard and the great door hospitably allowed us to slip inside.

The brightly lit interior was filled with Moroccans of all sizes and ages. A relative with a fixed smile and dazed eyes stepped forward to greet us and waft us, with the animated gestures of a policeman standing at the head of a traffic diversion, towards a narrow staircase of high, tiled steps—but even here there was an overflow. A guest squatted upon every step.

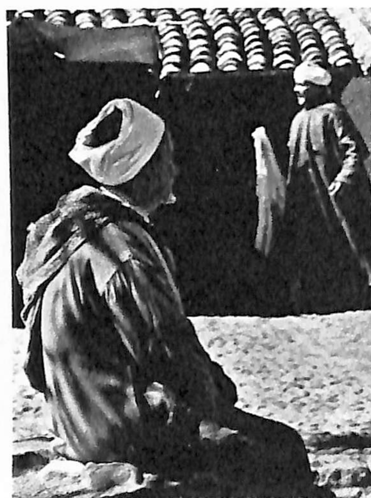
There were slender young Moors dressed in suits with a rakish Spanish cut, and stout old Moors proudly enveloped in white burnous; expansive Moors who smiled and nodded as we squeezed past them on the stairs, and reserved Moors, bearded and cloaked, who lowered their eyes and assumed a grave, puritanical air. There were modern Moors who looked bored, and old-fashioned Moors happily propped up against towers of cushions smoking vision-inducing *kif*. Some of the guests stayed for less than an hour, while others sat on and on until they were driven out by the flutes that herald the bride. Surely half of Tetuán's male Moorish population must have passed through the various reception halls, upstairs and downstairs, in the course of the evening.

Musicians known as *Al Gayyateen,* who play on occasions such as weddings, births or the entertainment of visitors. The people of the Rif Mountains in north Morocco, where this group comes from, are fiercely independent



The inside of the house was high and narrow like a cramped stage-set. Otherwise, it conformed to the general pattern—a central pillared courtyard with long, lofty rooms on all sides. The rooms had arched doorways but no doors, and arched window spaces but no glass, only curtains—all of which were drawn aside, with the exception of those belonging to the harem, where the invisible feminine members of the family sat apart in their long silk and brocade gowns, fringed headscarves and full regalia of jewels ancient and modern.

The staircase led to two upper storeys provided with exiguous galleries; guests were leaning over them, watching new arrivals and listening to two bands in the courtyard. These bands provided alternately for the 'old turbans' and for the unturbaned youth of the present generation: subtle rhythms of classical Andalusian music quickly followed by contemporary eastern compositions, stridently played upon trumpet and saxophone. Towards the end of the party an instrument was played solo for the first time. It was the *rhaïta*, a kind of oboe that wails like a bagpipe—a bagpipe with a sensual eastern wail. The old man who played it was Pan incarnate. He had a short, pointed beard and wild eyes drunk with musical ecstasy. As he became more and more excited, he jerked violently backwards and forwards with the curious staccato rhythm peculiar to eastern music.



The family and the tribe are the pivots around which life in the Rif towns and villages revolves. Here, a village elder suns himself, while a man bears a gift for a newborn child to his kinsman's house

Until the *rhaïta* roused us from our lethargy, we had had to endure three hours of polite immobility, seated upon Moorish divans in an airless room, drinking syrupy-sweet mint tea and eating 'wedding cakes' that resembled heavyweight baps, one of which must be taken home by every guest for luck. In the same way that westerners spend futile hours at cocktail parties with a glass in one hand and an indigestible savoury in the other, the Moors seem to spend even more futile hours squatting upon settees with a glass of amber-coloured tea and a sticky cake.

Every time our glasses were refilled from one of the many silver teapots requisitioned for the occasion, the barefoot servants dropped into our laps long silver scent-sprinklers, from which we helped ourselves to attar of roses. These finely-wrought scent-sprinklers are an essential part of a Moorish household's display of silver, since it enters into the traditional Moorish mode of gracious life to provide guests with perfume. The wedding guests showered the scent vigorously over their heads and hands, and lastly—an unexpected gesture—into their glasses of tea.

In the harem the ladies unbuttoned their high-necked, gold and silver braided dresses and sprinkled the attar of roses between their high, plump breasts. It was warmer in the harem than in the other rooms; the hothouse atmosphere was stifling and unhealthy, not only from a physical point of view. The antimony that so heavily underlined the ladies' bright black eyes had begun to melt under the combined influence of the heat and the tepid tears produced by ribald laughter, for the jokes and songs enjoyed on wedding nights are inclined to be of a Rabelaisian nature and, among the people, frankly obscene. The womenfolk are said to surpass the men in this respect.

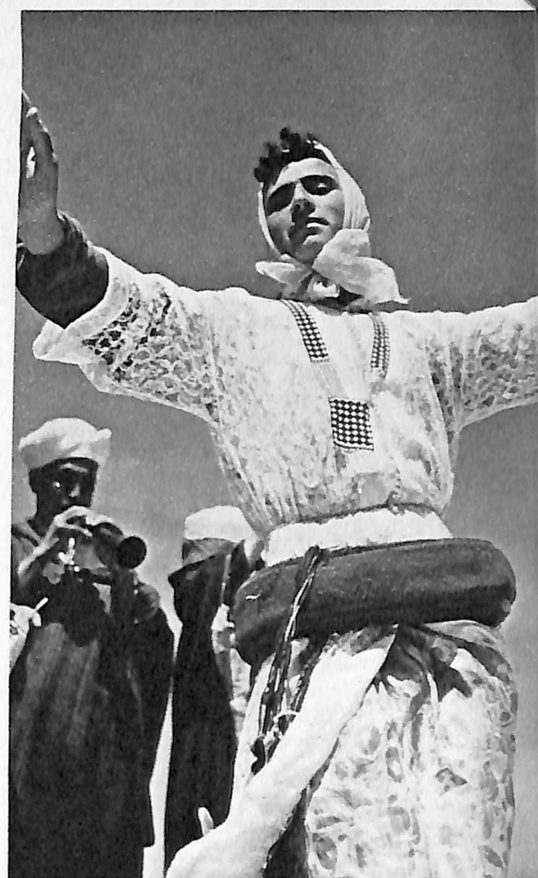
Downstairs in the courtyard a boy dancer had appeared to enliven the company with suggestive gestures better suited to the opposite sex. He was about thirteen years old and entirely free of inhibitions. Here, too, the atmosphere became a little unhealthy and strained. The orchestra broke into a modern Egyptian tune and the boy began to sing, but my escort refused to translate the words for me. Then the boy stopped, leered, and resumed his dance, bending backwards so that the guests

could stick a note on to his perspiring forehead. He had collected quite a number of notes by the end of the evening. Salome must have danced wantonly like this before Herod, but at least she was a woman.

As the hours dragged by, the bridegroom became more and more nervous until he finally retired to one of the smaller rooms at the top of the house, accompanied by a group of Moroccan and Spanish companions. There were no relatives, no 'old turbans' present, and so the bridegroom could remove his mask of smiling host and look just as he felt: utterly miserable. His anguish was not only mental. He stretched out his long legs, shook his feet, and groaned. His shoes, he confessed, were infernally tight and painful.

Suddenly a weird pot-and-pan noise was heard outside the house—*tee-re-am, tee-re-am,* like metallic castanets, only louder and more imperious, if possible. The bridegroom paused, listened, and the worried frown came back to his face. 'There are the Gnaoua—I must go down,' he said. When he was half-way downstairs he turned and called: 'If you want to have a look at my bride, go on ahead.' The Gnaoua—or Demon Dancers—had reached the house and were trooping into the courtyard. For the moment, bride and bridegroom were forgotten. The stark heart of Africa and its savage fetishism had descended like a stormcloud; the air was thick with black vibrations and smells. The suave Moors melted into the background, and their classical musicians, with their silver tone-poems of Andalusia, hastily retreated.

The Gnaoua of Tetuán are not wholly black any more. Inter-marriage and concubinage with the Moors for many generations has produced coffee-coloured complexions and fairly fine features on the whole, but the secret current that darts through their veins is utterly foreign to the quiet alleys and tidy mosques of Arab Tetuán. Theirs is the old, shrivelled, primitive religion peeping furtively through the holes in the cloak of Islam. There were seven adult Gnaoua and a child—a wizened, hollowed-eyed little boy of about six or seven years dressed as a man, in the same white turban and wide trousers as his seniors. Only the leader of the Gnaoua and the drummer wore red fezzes to distinguish them from the other devil-exorcizers. The leader did not take part in the dancing. He conversed with the people of the house, casually smoked a few cigarettes and sat in an adjoining room while his dancers went through a frenzied performance in which nobody appeared to be in the least interested. They had seen it countless times before.



The ancient commandments of the Prophet are strictly observed and enforced among the Rif people. The bright lights and skyscrapers of Casablanca or Tangier seem to them to belong to another world. According to their code no girl must ever dance in public, and the part of a girl dancer is always taken by a boy, who—as here—has to wear not only a girl's dress but a large symbolic woollen chastity belt

Tee-re-am, tee-re-am, gnashed the *qarqabou*—instruments like long double iron spoons—as the players raised them high above their heads like dumb-bells, while they pirouetted, turned on their heels and leapt into the centre of their circle like frantic frogs with impassive countenances. The drummer, a square-jawed, sinister individual, dominated the group. He did not dance, he did not even look at his companions as they whirled and crouched at his feet. His eyes were fixed upon a secret, inner vision; his face was set and unfeeling. The large drum which he played with curved drumsticks was covered with magic symbols, blue as tattoo marks: the star of Solomon, the hand of Fatima, and stylized Arabic characters.

Once they had chased the main body of devils away from the house with their ear-splitting din, the Gnaoua filed out and placed themselves in front of the bridegroom's car, for nobody doubted that envious spirits would accompany him on the way to and from the bride's house. Before they departed, however, the Gnaoua

were offered some refreshment, including a plate of *kouskous*, the national dish of steamed semolina pellets topped with meat and vegetables. They smiled for the first time that night as they sat down before the fragrant mound. Their dancing had made them ravenous. Only the child remained solemn as he hungrily stretched his thin arms towards the *kouskous*. They ate in a room apart. The Moors glanced at them from time to time with amused tolerance, for the invisible brand of slavery and racialism still hangs over the devil-dancers.

The bride's house was in one of those intimate little cul-de-sacs that give Tetuán such a self-consciously theatrical air, especially at night. Here, too, the door was ajar, but it let out only a narrow, parsimonious gleam that was not strong enough to disperse the threatening shadows beyond, which were surely filled with lurking jinns. On the other side of the door a bunch of fat female servants, their heads bound up in multicoloured scarves, eyes heavily underlined with *kohl*, were all agog and ready to bar the entrance to strange men with the formidable weight of their wobbly flesh. As soon as the object of my tempestuous visit had been briefly explained, an arm shot out and hooked me in.

There was not a single man to be seen inside the house—only a hysterical, gesticulating group of women in flowered chiffon gowns, and a couple of negresses draped in folds of purple and turquoise, rushing backwards and forwards against a background of green tiles. The bridegroom would be here any moment now. We could hear the muffled sounds of the procession slowly advancing to the accompaniment of drums, pipes and *qarqabou*.

The little bride was seated like an idol in a gorgeously tiled room off the central courtyard, her young head bowed under the weight of her Moorish heirlooms and her grief for, according to the traditions of her country, she had never set eyes upon the rapidly-approaching groom, and no other male except her father and brothers had ever touched her. The ordeal that lay in front of her had been explained in realistic detail, but now that it was actually on its way, within audible distance, she had been seized by terror and was trembling violently. Relatives and attendants hovered round, briskly smoothing her white satin dress, patting her veil, resetting her resplendent tiara, completely oblivious to and unmoved by the sobs of the youthful victim decked for sacrifice.

Did I wish to see the bride's closely veiled face? By all means. An obliging relative ran over and lifted the heavy brocade that concealed her tearstained countenance. The bride could not have been more than sixteen years old; she was a pretty little thing, with a light complexion and wavy chestnut hair tufted round her heart-shaped face in the untidy Moorish way. Great tears coursed slowly down her flushed cheeks from under her downcast eyes, and her firm young breast was heaving with sobs. So full of woe was she that she paid not the slightest attention to me or to her attendants, who dabbed her eyes carefully so as not to smudge her make-up. She was ablaze with jewels; a gold and diamond pendant sparkled upon her forehead, emerald earrings fell to her shoulders and golden necklaces formed an almost solid shield from throat to waist. The shrill *you-yous* of welcome, that have quavered down the ages from the times of the priestesses of Baal, announced that the bridegroom had been sighted. The veil was hurriedly lowered over the bride's virginal face, and I quickly left the house.

A picturesque pantomime character had appeared in front of the house, blowing



Rif women must hide not only their faces, except for their eyes, but every other part of their bodies: they dare not even expose their hands. The *haik*—the voluminous robe worn by women in the mountainous regions of northern Morocco—enables women to carry their belongings through the streets without exposing as much as a little finger to public view

a long, slim flute towards the four points of the compass. Then he lowered his instrument until it appeared to be sniffing the ground like an elephant's trunk; perhaps it was searching for those evil jinns that are to be found near drains and latrines. The flute player advanced into the shadows, pursuing his lowly investigations until he was swallowed up by the darkness. The bridegroom's car was arriving in reverse while the Gnaoua and the *rhaïta* player provided music in front and behind. The bridegroom unfolded himself with difficulty when he reached the door, amid delighted yells and *you-yous* from inside and out.

Less than five minutes later, he emerged from the house with his little bride on his arm—an unheard-of gesture among the circumspect Moors of Tetuán. Her white veil nestled softly against his white burnous; the tip of her tiara only just reached the level of his shoulder. He led her slowly to the car, for she walked like a somnambulist with lowered eyes. Once inside, he carefully arranged her veil, while she sat, stiff as a Madonna about to be borne in procession. The great door that for so many years had kept all strangers at bay closed slowly with a deep sigh. The chaste life in the quiet home of her childhood was over. Taieb patted her arm and looked down at her with tender possessiveness, but she remained silent and outwardly unmoved, as all Moorish brides must be. It would be indecorous for her to speak to her husband at all during their first night together.

The bridal cortège lumbered along towards the bridegroom's house where the last semi-public phase of the drama would take place. The procession was headed by a large negress bearing a lighted candle. She was one of the *negaffat*, a veritable corporation of black prime movers who manage the stagecraft and preliminaries of a Moorish wedding. Another negress, a family slave-servant, had preceded her, balancing a round tray upon her turbaned head, where part of the trousseau had been neatly folded and piled, gold and crisp as pancakes in the moonlight.

The party arrived at the bridegroom's house, which had now been taken over by the womenfolk. The bride was led in little stumbling steps to the threshold of her new home, where her mother-in-law would take her under her experienced and masterful wing. They lifted her veil and offered her the traditional symbols of welcome: a glass of sour milk, a plateful of dates—the simple, patriarchal products of a people whose roots are in the desert, beside their tents and camels.

Malaya's jungle people

The 60,000 aborigines of the Malayan jungle are from an enormous range of races and customs. There are the tiny black nomadic Negritos; the Semai people, skilled with the nose-flute and the blowpipe; and, most colourful of all, the Temers, who live above the rapids of the Jendera River in Kelantan

THE TEMERS might be called the 'dream people'. As soon as they wake they tell one another their dreams, and in whatever action they do—whether hunting, fishing or planting tapioca—they allow themselves to be guided by spirits talking to them in their sleep. By speaking out their dreams, their guilt feelings of the previous day are brought to the surface as in confession, and dissipate in the morning mists and sun.

The jungle world of the Temers is full of spirits. Friendly spirits can be enticed by singing the right tune, or by displaying flowers in the hair and bright beads across the chest; hostile spirits lying in wait in the rapids or jungle can be warded off by face-markings in red dye made from the crushed flowers of the *kesumba* plant. Temers are skilled navigators of rafts and dug-out canoes on the jungle rivers. If they suspect the presence of malevolent spirits, they beat the river with poles, or shout blood-curdling whoops as they skim down the rapids.

Like most jungle aborigines, Temers are normally gentle, cheerful and hospitable. If you are invited to attend their trance dances, which run for three consecutive nights, you should never refuse their offerings of food and tobacco. Acceptance will give them pleasure and they expect nothing in return—though if you present the headman with a sharp *parang* (a knife of panga type), some packets of rice and a quantity of cheap Chinese cigarettes, his people will be delighted with you. Their cool homes, raised high on stilts, are thatched with the palm-like leaves of the *bertam* and have walls made of flattened strips of bamboo. Houses are often surrounded by groves of the feathery leaves of the tapioca plant, whose roots form the aborigines' staple diet.

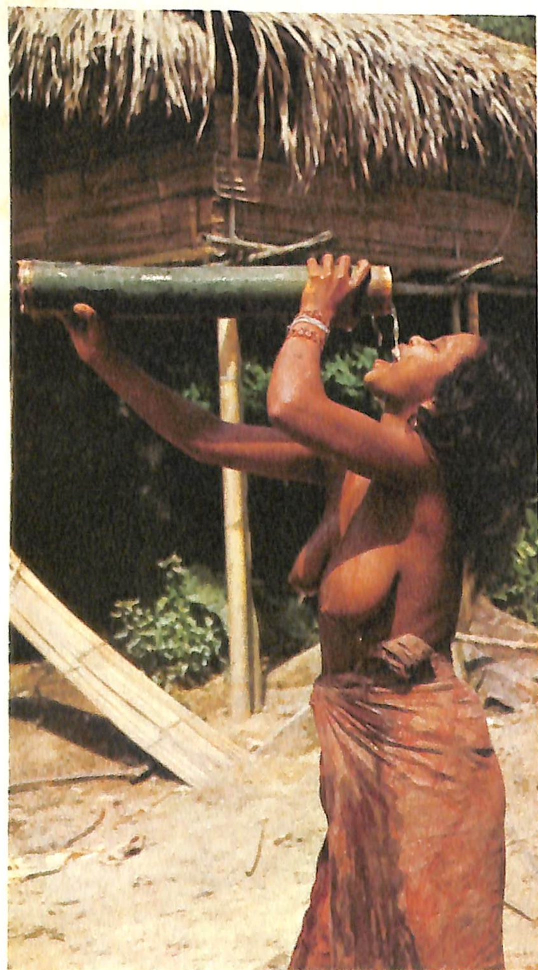
Temers never argue. If they are embarrassed by a questioner, they avoid conflict by quietly leaving. Expert with blowpipes, they graciously warn the visitor not to come too close when they are preparing the sticky brown poison called *anti-arin* for their nine-inch darts. Their code of behaviour is strict: 'Never talk to your mother-in-law; never shoot poison darts at humans; and don't laugh at butterflies!'

A Semai Senoi aborigine takes aim with a seven-foot blowpipe, with which he can kill a bird in flight at twenty yards. The porcupine quill fitted through a hole in his nose is claimed to be a valuable sighting aid against moving targets



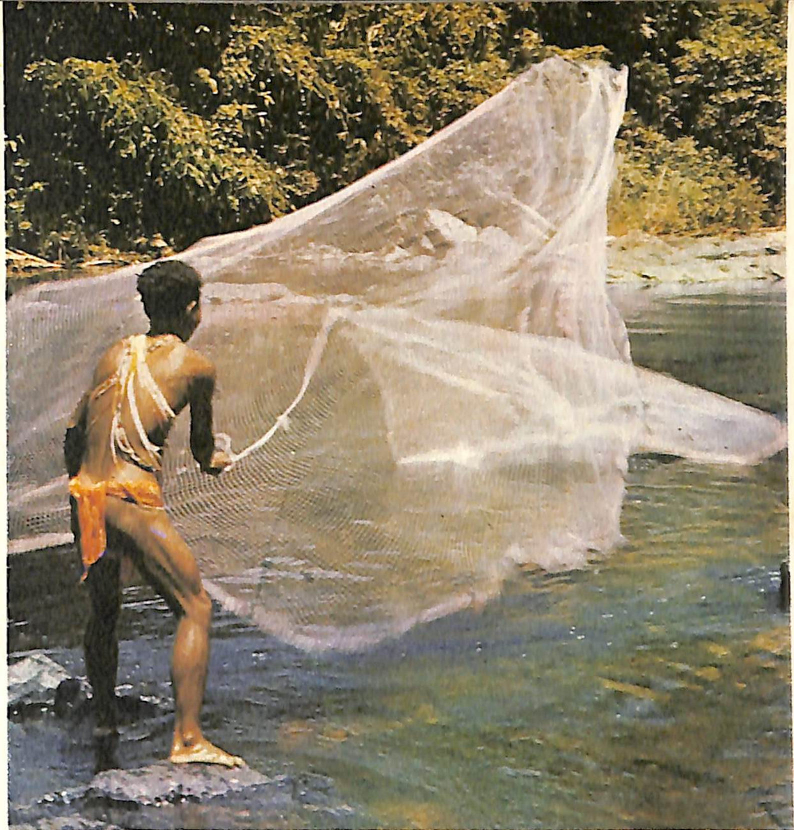
The river for work and play

Spear-shaped paddles deftly and swiftly used are essential for navigating the Jendera River in Kelantan, one of Malaya's most dangerous rivers. The least swirl in the water, or a change in its direction or colour, is a sign for the Temers to stab with their paddles and steer clear of hidden rocks. Red face-markings protect against malicious spirits, while flowers and a bright sarong attract friendly ones



A girl of the Semai Senoi drinks from a bamboo water container. Water from jungle rivers is delicious and uncontaminated. Each day a woman carries several bamboo nodes of water from the river to her home





With a flash of the wrist a Temer throws a net across the water and catches a dozen fish. Temers often act on instructions given by spirits in dreams to find the best place in the river for a successful catch. Whipcord muscles in the legs are kept in trim by jungle marches of up to fifty miles in a single day



Temer children play in the cool river. The Temers believe that mischievous spirits in the rapids can cause accidents, but that friendly spirits, attracted by the flowers worn in the hair, keep watch and come to the rescue. Most river Temers are good swimmers

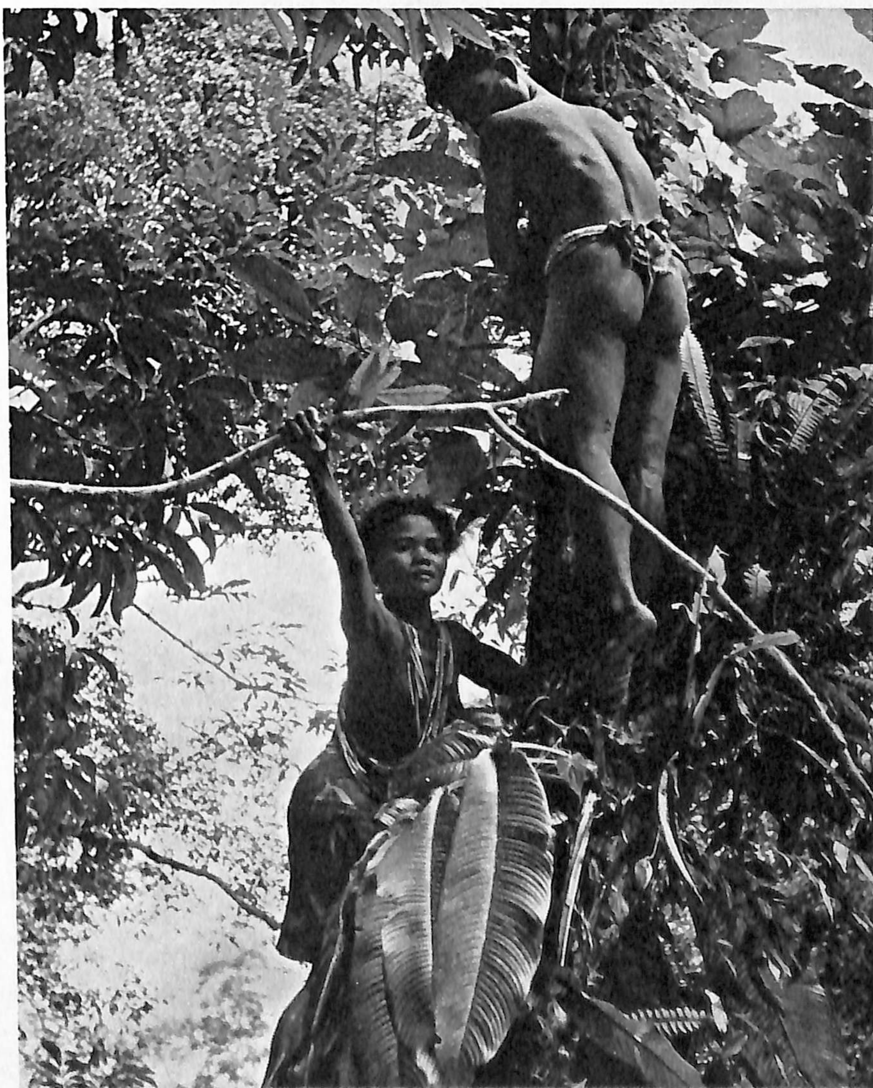
A party of Temers, their heads crowned with orange flowers, glide down the jungle river on a raft. Rafts are made of nine or more bamboos lashed with rattan and fitted with a superstructure to keep food and personal possessions from getting wet. The women are often as steady and sure at poling as the men



Fallen tree-trunks make useful bridges for Temers accustomed to balancing on the narrowest of logs. The men, returning after a long journey, have already whooped greetings from a distance. The women hurry out to meet them and hear of their disappointment at finding no game in the jungle. Tonight there will be no tree-rats or monkeys to eat—only the eternal tapioca



A Temer squats for a girl to paint his face with red *kesumba* juice as a protection against spirits. Though westerners regard such decorations as merely eccentric, in fact they form part of an ordered structure of belief. This young aborigine has a fund of knowledge about jungle plants and their uses, jungle animals and their ways, and jungle birds and their calls. He is constantly aware of the presence of spirits, and devotes much of his energies to dealing with them



Gathering ripe fruit from a durian tree. Birds, tree-rats, lorises, and monkeys are in direct competition with Temers; and a single night's raid by flying foxes can strip a durian tree of all its fruit



Even the youngest aborigines smoke cigarettes, for smoking lessens hunger. Temers buy Siamese or Chinese tobacco in exchange for jungle produce; they roll it neatly and smoke it in leaves. The smell of cigarettes is sometimes the first indication that a party of aborigines is close at hand



ROGER PILKINGTON

Dutch cheese market

Every Friday morning from April to September the picturesque town of Alkmaar is the scene of a unique market. Burly porters plod across the square, bowed under the weight of wooden cradles piled with the Dutch cheeses that will later find their way all over the world



LIKE SO MUCH else in Holland, Alkmaar's strange cheese market is best seen from a boat. Not that one has the most intimate view of the actual bargaining—by which the current price of Edam cheese is fixed—but from a boat one is more likely to see all the little preparations which are over and done with before the tourist buses haul in from Amsterdam shortly before ten o'clock in the morning.

The harbour-master left his beautiful little watch-tower on the bend of the North Holland Canal to accompany our boat in person from bridge to bridge to make sure that her berth on the Voordam was one from which we would have the best possible view of the early proceedings.

Shortly after six on Friday morning the first of the trucks arrived, fitted with racks of just the right dimensions to hold either the big cart-wheel cheeses or the more common rounder ones of two kilograms apiece. It backed up to the square, the tailboard was dropped, and a man and a boy jumped in to bend down and hurl out the yellow-orange rounds between their legs. One after the other the fat cheeses landed with a smack on the cobbles and bounced away like footballs to where a couple of men in yellow clogs knelt on the sets to stack the balls in rows. Some bounced past them and went hopping down the square to be fielded by boards set along the edge of the quay, from where a small boy bowled them back.

At about the same time a barge crept through from the North Holland Canal to moor across the water from where we lay, and the moment the hold cover had been removed the skipper and his lad began to toss a few more tons of the round cheeses up in the air and over the stop-boards on to the cobbles beyond.

To simplify counting, the grey expanse of the market place was inlaid with lines of a lighter stone marking out spaces just ten cheeses broad, which ran from side to side of the square. As each fresh lorry arrived the stackers got to work on a new bed, and by nine o'clock most of the cheeses were in position, neatly laid out in double-deck piles, and tarpaulins had been drawn over them to keep off the rain or dust or sunshine. More than 13,000 in number, the balls and rounds awaited the moment when the selling might begin.

The cheese-porters of Alkmaar, wearing the uniform of their ancient guild, carry cheeses on wooden cradles to and from the weigh-house. Each cradle contains eighty cheeses, weighing in all about 340 pounds

At ten o'clock the weigh-house carillon announced the hour with a gay little tune. The knights in armour charged out of their doorways, bore down upon each other, missed, and disappeared again through the little portals which opened at their approach and snapped shut behind them to keep them safe for their next hourly combat. The wooden figure of the trumpeter above them jerkily raised his arm and a fanfare floated away over the roof-tops of the town. The farmers and cheese-factory agents drew back the covers and within the next few minutes the twenty-seven tons of cheeses had all been sold.

The actual selling was not done by auction. A wholesaler, a local man perhaps, though probably with contacts as far distant as Knightsbridge or Piccadilly, would survey a pile of cheeses and pick out one. Then he would pull from his pocket an implement like an apple-corer and bore a hole down to the centre of the cheese so that he could inspect the circular section which he cut out, and break off the inner end to taste it. Looking professionally not entirely satisfied he would then replace the rest of the boring in its hole and pick up another cheese to strike it hard with his fist. *'Kloppt goed,'* the owner would reassure him, picking up another and hammering it with his fist. *'Kloppt goed.'*

The buyer would give another cheese or two a hearty *kloppen,* listening each time to the thud with all the attention of a tuner at work on a concert piano. Then perhaps he might take another core, and yet another, until having at last made his considered assessment of the quality he would suggest a price. The farmer would in his turn look dubious and suggest a somewhat higher figure, but soon a bargain would be struck and sealed by something between a shake and a clap of hands.

With the cheeses sold it merely remained for the lot to be weighed and its price marked up on a board. The weighing was of course the highlight of the proceedings. Alkmaar has an ancient Guild of Cheese-porters, who alone may take the lots to the giant balance of the municipal weighmaster which stands in the open base of the tower.

The Guild is divided into four companies, and the six porters of each company are distinguished by the bright straw hats of red, yellow, green or blue, which together with a suit of spotless white overalls makes up their uniform. There is a regular hierarchy within each company of porters too, various strange insignia such as a ribbon and a silver badge or miniature cheese-barrow denoting the ranks of *provoost* or *voorman,* and there is a definite system of which man will work with which when a load is to be carried.

Portering is hard work, because even though the distance is short the conveyance is somewhat awkward and the weight heavy. A curved sled, painted in the colour of the company, is laid on the ground and the first layer of cheeses is piled on it in a rectangle several cheeses broad and six or seven cheeses long. Two or three other layers are added above, decreasing one cheese in each direction, until the load adds up to some eighty cheeses and weighs rather more than three hundredweight. Two porters take up their positions fore and aft between the protruding handles, stoop down, loop over the handles the ends of leather braces which pass over their shoulders, and at a command from the elder of the two they shuffle away to the weigh-house at a jogging trot, with the younger porter always leading. Once weighed, the loads are cleared by lorries, or by boat, and by midday Alkmaar is back to normal for another week, while the cheese goes to shops all over Europe.



Trains, coaches, cars and boats bring hundreds of people to watch the market. Alkmaar lies at the heart of the polder district, and is the centre for cattle, eggs and vegetables, as well as cheese

Teheran by night

Iran's fast-growing capital has an air of hurried modernity, its tentacles spreading out into the surrounding desert. On hot summer nights life in Teheran's streets is a bustling, bubbling mixture of jostling crowds, killer taxis and street vendors, with roof-top cinemas offering a refuge from the turmoil below



AT NIGHT in Teheran the heat is stifling. I look out of the window of my second-storey room at the building opposite and at the flat roofs beyond it. Past the first few roofs the heat seems to have clamped down an impenetrable haze that blots out everything, including the mountain background, which one knows is there but cannot see. On balconies and roofs men are sitting about in their vests, but I have no balcony and no roof.

I leave my furnace of a room only to find that the streets are just as hot. The neon signs flash on and off—soft drinks, motor cars, stockings, refrigerators, cinemas. I walk towards a roundabout containing a small garden and refreshing-looking fountains, with in the middle a statue of a gentleman wearing a robe that looks like a frock-coat, top-boots and plumed turban. His right hand is upraised as though about to hail a taxi. It is the poet Firdowsi, declaiming from the *Chronicle of the Kings*, and he faces down the avenue named after him.

I attempt to cross over Shah Reza Avenue into Firdowsi Avenue, using one of the pedestrian crossings painted in white lines on the road, but the white is so faded as to be almost indistinguishable and the headlong traffic pays no attention. So I choose another point, where at least I can get a straight view of the road, and scuttle across.

Down Firdowsi Avenue I come to the carpet shops. I recognize some of the patterns—the scarlet, green and yellow Kashan, the blood-red and black Turkoman. The shops are all together in a row of a dozen or more as is the way in the East. A stocky, sunburnt man, wearing a monocle, sees me looking in his window.

'*Bitte, kommen Sie herein,*' he says.

'*Vielen Dank, aber . . .*'

'You are Swedish?'

'No. English.'

He laughs. 'Then why don't we speak English together? Excuse me, but you know how it is in Teheran. One does not always know what language to speak. You would like to have a look at my carpets?'

'Thank you,' I reply. 'Some time I will. But I've only just arrived here and I already have some Persian carpets. Still, I may buy one or two more before I leave.'

'You got yours in Iran?'

'In India about eighteen years ago.'

The square-jawed stocky man throws up his hands. 'Then I'll buy yours!' he exclaims. 'The price has gone up twenty times since then.'

'And the carpets are manufactured, and they use alkaline dyes instead of natural ones.'

'Ah, ah! They are! They do! You may still have some natural ones from the tribes, but the factories use chemical dyes. Many years ago I was making carpets in Tabriz, always with natural dyes. I had three hundred children making them for me. They were the best. Then the King, Reza Shah, who's now dead, asked me to come to Teheran to start his carpet factory. For a year and a half I worked without any pay. Soon I was writing to the bank at home to get money back here. But I couldn't carry on.'

I walk away from the German carpet-seller down the long wall of the British Embassy, which a century ago was built on the edge of the city. Now so greatly has Teheran grown that it is more or less in the middle. Cool and shady, overarched by the big Persian plane trees called chenars, with walnut trees, a lawn and a swimming pool, the grounds are an oasis in the turmoil of the overheated and crowded streets.

Inside in the Victorian dining-room a silver plaque commemorates the dinner given during the Teheran Conference of 1943, with the names of President Roosevelt, Mr. Churchill and Marshal Stalin, while across a narrow street the high wall of the Russian Embassy lies flank to flank with the British. When the Shah said that the walls of the Teheran compounds ought to be pulled down in order to give the city a more open appearance, the British said that they would pull their walls down provided that the Russians agreed to do the same.

I poise to cross the road again. Taxis flood the streets, cutting in and out, coming to sudden halts, pulling out across the traffic, doing U turns, swerving round sheep and donkeys, getting dented and denting others. I step across the deep gutter running alongside the street and stand waiting an eternity for a gap in the traffic.

On the other side of the street the art and antique-dealers show their various wares. There are pictures of Shah Abbas, the great king, of Leila and Majnun, the great lovers, and of Rustam, the great hero, done in bright reds and blues and golds and framed in quotations from the poets. There too are boxes faced with inlaid marquetry, miniature paintings of polo players and pastoral scenes on bone and ivory, filigree work in brooches and bracelets, earrings in the form of bells, brass pots and plates and dishes, old bronze from India, labelled 'One God—1,000 rials, One Elephant—780 rials, One Wheel of God (broken)—600 rials', and peasant jewellery, old daggers and guns.

'Come and see,' they say. But it is hot and they are not very insistent. I come to a kiosk where European newspapers and European paperback books with lurid, sexy covers are being sold. I buy yesterday's *Times* for the equivalent of one and ninepence and walk on past street vendors who sit on the pavement with their wares spread out beside them, or on a plank of wood propped up with boxes. In their choice of goods there are certain things they always seem to go for—pens and pencils, razor-blades, penknives, cigarette lighters, matches, cigarettes of all



Persian carpets, to be found stacked in and around Teheran's bazaar, have always been famous for their excellent craftsmanship, beauty of design and colour. Although carpet factories were introduced by the father of the present Shah, many of them are still hand-made and are known by the district where they were woven—as Isfahan, Tabriz, Kashan, Hamadan or Sistan carpets. Persian carpet patterns, which have exerted a strong influence on Indian carpet making, have remained virtually unchanged for centuries



Teheran's bazaar, a criss-cross of narrow passages with light filtering down from openings at the top of the domes that make up the roof, offers an infinite variety of goods in chaotic profusion. There are clothes, lamps, soap and toothpaste; samovars, antique curios and Italian accordions; and scholarly tomes on Chinese, English or French literature next to 'girlie' magazines. Sometimes pious Muslims, in their turbans, robes and Turkish slippers, pass by on their way to the King's Mosque–one of Islam's holy places

nations, with some of the packets open for sale one by one, hairpins, envelopes, writing paper, watch straps, combs, sunglasses. But some of the things are quite inexplicable–four pairs of doll's shoes (surely they are too small for any baby), a whistle, a set of false teeth. Sales are rare, and if they dispose of a dozen things in a day, they have gained something to carry on with while they dream of owning their own shops and getting off the pavement.

Turning left into the street called Istanbul, alongside the Turkish Embassy, I find these street vendors in larger numbers. Here, they are more specialized. One sells vests and underpants, another trousers, another loose, short-sleeved shirts that hang outside the trousers, and another has hitched his star to ladies' sandals with shining gilt or silver straps. Behind them there is a series of cavernous retreats containing row upon row of trousers and suits. The crowd is thick–mostly men, but some women too, dressed in the western mode, and also women with purdah cloaks over their heads. The *chādors*, as they are called, are either black, or blue with white polka dots or leaf designs on them, and they intriguingly cover the western clothes beneath.

In Istanbul, which is a section of the long Avenue Shah, there are cinemas showing American, Italian and Persian films. Everywhere one sees the soft-drink stalls. Some are set back from the street, complete with counter bars and cash registers, some are booths standing on the pavement, and some are just a crate of bottles in a corner, an ice box, and a block of ice in a sack, leaking out into the gutter. They are all singularly lacking in what one needs just as much as the drink itself–a place in which to sit down and cool off.

My feet are aching and legs quaking, although I have only walked half a mile across a small fragment of the vast city of 2 million inhabitants, which is a tenth of the entire population of Iran. So I look for a haven and dive into one of the few restaurants in the neighbourhood. Inside there is an air of coolness and emptiness. Fans on standards are whirling the air around above me, and most of the tables are virgin white and unoccupied. The waiter comes to me without a menu, so I ask him what there is to eat.

'*Chelo kebāb*,' he says.

'Anything else?'

'Chicken rice.'

'No. I had that for lunch.'

'Ah!'

'All right then. *Chelo kebāb* it is.'

'*Kheili khub!*' the waiter says happily. 'Very good!'

He goes away and returns with a plate of gherkins, another plate with a raw onion on it, cut into four pieces, a glass dish with cream in it, a bottle of fizzy, sour milk called *dugh*, and a tumbler containing *māst*, which is more or less the same as yoghurt. I am still eating the *māst* when the waiter returns with a little Vesuvius of white rice, accompanied by a pat of butter from the refrigerator. This is indeed a white meal–white *māst*, white cream, white milk, white onion, white tablecloth. Now the waiter puts down a plate of *kebāb* in front of me, about nine inches of grilled meat, pulled off the skewer but still sticking together, with three grilled tomatoes.

The mountain of rice is in front of me, so I have to assault it. But what about

the onion and the gherkins? There is no knife, so I cannot cut them up and spread them over the rice. Likewise the mountain is too steep and fills the plate too completely for me to mix the meat and tomatoes into it. There seems to be only one solution—a mouthful of rice, followed by a piece of meat, some tomato and then a bite at a gherkin and a bite at the onion, held between the fingers, all in a kind of incessant rotation, mixing them in the stomach if not on the plate.

But it's heavy work in the heat, and I have to give up the effort when the mountain has been reduced to the size of a hill. I hand the waiter a hundred-rial note, and walk out into the street.

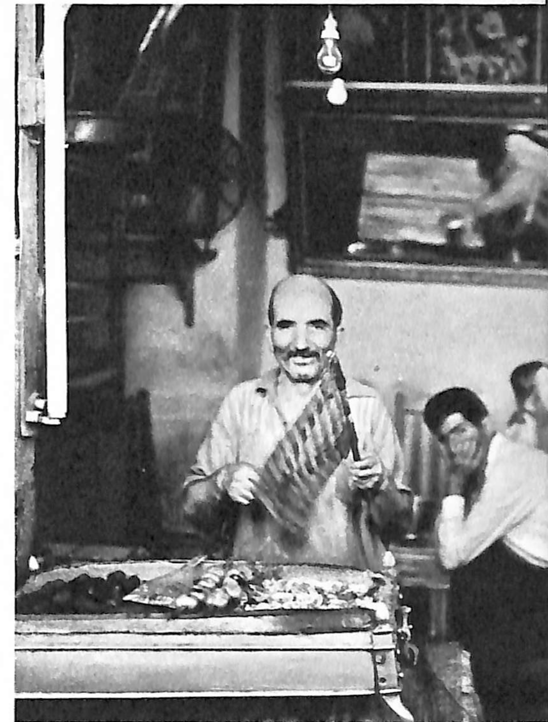
It is getting late now, but I have no desire to return to my oven of a room, so I dive into a cinema. There are two ticket offices, one marked 'winter' and the other 'summer', so I am perplexed. If 'winter' means that it is like winter inside, then that is the one for me. I go down the lane for winter tickets, but the girl in the ticket office waves me away. Behind me I hear light schoolgirl voices. 'It's the other one, please, from half past seven.' 'Thank you, thank you,' I reply, and after buying a 'summer' ticket I am pleasantly surprised to find myself directed upstairs and out into the open, where there is an open-air screen on the roof of the building.

The film is an Italian comedy about three railway employees and their adventures with their girl friends. It is dubbed with simultaneous speech in Farsi. But in Farsi it usually takes even more syllables to say something than it does in Italian, so in order to synchronize the words with the action, the dubbing is set at a tremendous speed, and all the characters seem to be having a verbal race with one another.

I come out of the cinema with the crowd and face a mob of taxis, blocking the avenue trying to get the cinema-goers' custom. Evading them and the crowd, I walk away down the street, which is now fairly deserted. A taxi with a bashed-in door and a starred windscreen comes rattling past. I hail it and tell the wrinkled, shaven-headed driver to take me up Firdowsi Avenue and to stop just short of the statue of the poet. When we get there I hand him a twenty-rial note and start getting out. But just as I am leaving the car, I see his gnarled old hand stretched out towards me with five rials change. There is still an honest man in the business, who gives change back without being asked for it.

There are few people about now. A woman in a black *chādor* and high-heeled golden sandals turns beady eyes on me and mutters something as I go past. Another, with lean, staring face, meanders about the broad pavement, and as she does so, a taxi with two men in the back draws up beside her. One of them gets out and pulls at her arm. She pulls away and totters about like a mechanical marionette. He prances around her, laughs raucously at his own joke, and retreats into his taxi.

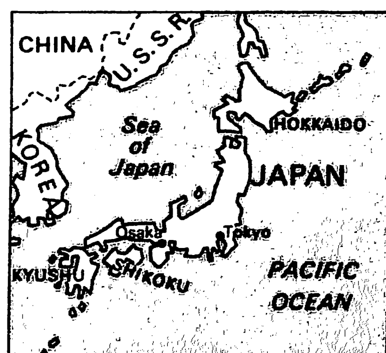
A stocky young man, with a smooth, egg-shaped head, comes up to me and offers me a woman if I'll follow him up the next alley. 'She's a Turk,' he says, as if to be Turkish were to be specially attractive. Then three pallid, blond, European young men, in white shirt sleeves, cuff-links and cravats, walk past with eyes agog and safety in their numbers. I look up the long double rows of lights of Shah Reza Avenue, rising dead straight into the distance and the desert, and I turn away towards my own bolt-hole.

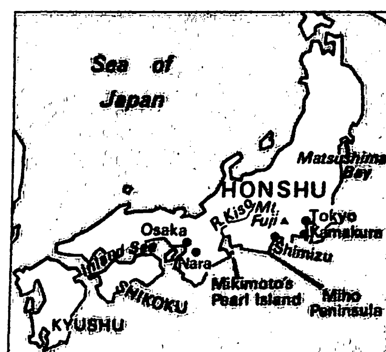


Kebābs—skewered meats grilled with tomatoes—are popular, particularly in workers' cafés, because they vary the everyday monotony of Iran's thick soups, vegetables and yoghurt. Long-needle rice is considered a great delicacy; but Persian caviar, probably the best in the world, is beyond the financial reach of most Iranians

The wrestling giants

For all its booming industry, Japan is still a land where traditions have an ancestral power. Some, such as judo, flower arrangement and the Japanese garden, have spread all over the world. Others, like the arts of the geisha and the extraordinary ritual of the sumo wrestlers, have so far been too Japanese for transplantation





THE TWO great fat elephants of men came together with a resounding thud. The public cheered and shouted: 'Smash him! Murder him! At him!'

Could these be the same people as those who sit and look at the moon for hours, reciting lyric poetry the while? Were these the people who with infinite patience will produce dwarf trees, who will go in ecstasies over the 'violin-playing' of grasshoppers and who dilate their nostrils to snuff the spicy smell of incense while munching lotus seeds? They could and were. But they were Japanese, and you realize that just as you think that you are beginning to understand their strange mentality, you find that you do not understand a thing.

The normal Japanese is short, has a slender frame, delicate hands, small feet, and is graceful in his movements. There are many types of them, mixtures of emigrants from Polynesia, the Malay Islands, China, Korea and Mongolia, to say nothing of the Caucasian Ainu of Hokkaido. Some are round-headed and big-jawed, and have high cheekbones. Others have narrow, strongly-marked features more Indian than Asiatic. Some have flat, small noses; others have aquiline noses. The slant of their eyes varies considerably.

Sumo wrestlers are something apart. They are giants, who would attract attention in any country. They are what one would imagine the fruit of an affair between a phlegmatic, somnolent hippo and an aggressive, heavy-limbed gorilla to be like.

They are so fat that they cannot even tie their own shoelaces, and many of them would have difficulty in clasping their hands over their stomachs. Like most Orientals they have little hair except on their heads, where it is allowed to grow unchecked until it can be knotted on top, as the old samurai used to wear it. When they throw off their elegant kimonos and stand there in the ring, as good as naked—for they only have a narrow strip of cloth between their quivering fat thighs—the hairlessness of the rest of their bodies is emphasized. The G-string is fastened fore and aft to a stout leather belt, covered with material which has a fringe in front to act as an apron.

Japanese wrestlers weigh from sixteen to twenty-six stone and most are between six feet and six feet four inches tall; though one record giant was seven feet eight



Professional sumo wrestling tournaments take place three times a year in the Kokugikwan Stadium in Tokyo. Between bouts the wrestlers perform the ceremony known as the *Dohyoiri,* or Ring Entry

inches and weighed twenty-eight stone eleven pounds. There have been three who were seven feet six inches tall. There are smaller editions, of course, but in sumo contestants are not matched by weight. In most cases victory goes to the one who has the most avoirdupois to take into the ring, which, unlike a boxing-ring, really is round. It is fenced by two lines of straw rope, but, as these are nailed to the floor, there are no ropes to hang on to. The ring is fifteen feet in diameter.

The evening's proceedings open with the first couple cutting a few ritual capers, as sumo wrestlers have done since before our era began, for this form of wrestling is an ancient sport, the origins of which are lost in the mists of Japanese myth. This ritual 'dance' was originally a choreographic prayer to the gods for victory, but now is like a couple of hippos trying a *pas de deux* from *Swan Lake*. The Japanese take this introductory dance with the utmost seriousness. When it is finished, the two giants take a mouthful of water from a bucket in a corner outside the ring and rinse their mouths. They spit the water on to the sanded floor of the ring and strew salt over the place where they are to wrestle. In Japan, magical cleansing properties are attributed to salt, and it is strewn in temples and on domestic mats in order to keep evil spirits away.

The referee enters the ring, dressed in an ankle-length kimono and holding a fan. The two giants then squat facing each other, about six feet apart, one on each side of a line painted on the floor, on which they rest their fat knuckles. Their attitude is that of gorillas before they attack. Two mountains of fat confront each other, glaring at each other like fighting cocks. The referee manipulates his fan. The crowded hall waits in breathless silence. The atmosphere is electric. The two giants break the spell. They stand up and take a turn round their half of the ring, stretch their arms, flex their knees and stamp on the floor. Crouch down. Knuckles on the floor. Stare at your opponent. Up again—trot round—crouch again. This can go on for a good quarter of an hour. The referee uses his fan with the grace of a geisha, only he is not so good-looking and certainly not as exciting.

All at once, the spark comes. The referee points his fan downwards—they're off, like two locomotives thundering down at each other on the same track. A fraction of a second, and they ram each other with a smack of quivering flesh that reverberates through the hall. They seize hold of each other with their fat sausagy fingers—by the shoulder, under the arm or with a hand on either side of the belt. They sway from side to side, tumble round like a couple of whales at the spring mating, snorting, gasping for breath, sweating, till one trips the other or throws him over his shoulder so that he hits the sand with an echoing crash. It sometimes happens that they tumble out of the ring clasped together and roll on across the barrier of sandbags that separates the ring from the spectators.

And that is that. The one who touches the ground first with any part of his body is the loser. There are no rounds, no points, no counting to ten, nor any rule that both shoulders shall touch the ground. Usually it is all over in less than a minute, if you do not count the long introduction when the contestants glare at each other while waiting for the spark to be struck in their heroic swelling chests. The victor chivalrously helps his defeated opponent to his feet and each goes to his corner. There is no collecting of cards. The decision and the prize-money are given straight away.

While the spectators are still cheering, the winner is handed an envelope

with the money. The prizes are presented by business houses, and posters advertising the donors are borne round as each one is presented. Then the next two locomotives are driven out from the shed.

Sumo contests are held three times a year and last a fortnight on each occasion. At these times, theatres, cinemas and restaurants are deserted, while the entire population of Japan sits glued to its television sets. Only a tiny proportion of the population can get a ticket for the actual fights—at fantastic prices. One bout follows another. People have their favourites. The wrestlers are arranged into classes depending on the number of victories they have had. A defeat sends them down to the class below. There are two rival 'stables', East and West, to which they all belong, fighting each other at the three annual contests and giving exhibition bouts up and down the country during the rest of the year.

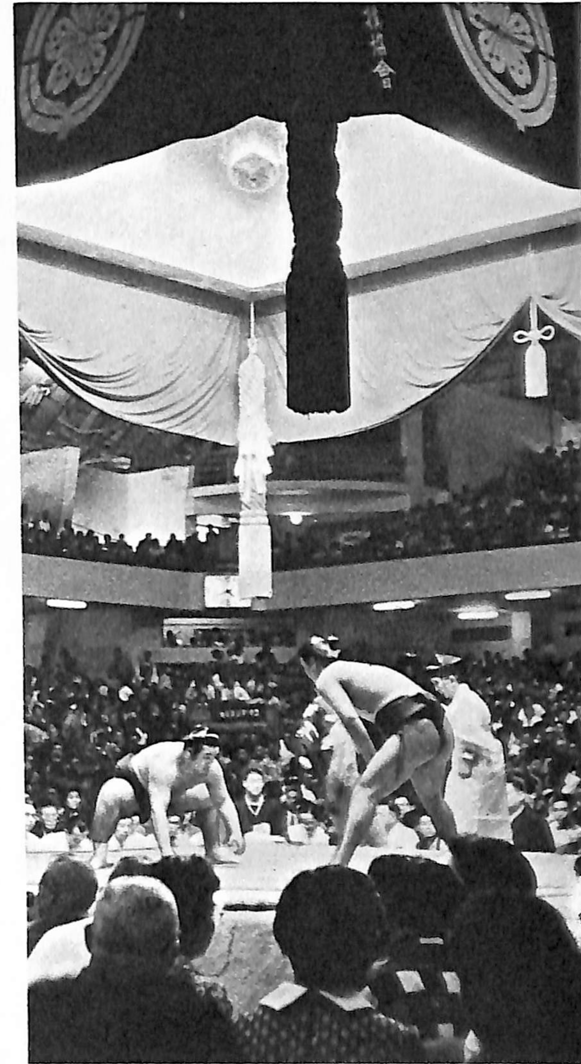
The stables see to the wrestlers' training and maintenance, from the moment the parents bring them a big fat lad whom they consider worthy. This usually happens when a boy is about ten. The parents, if they are poor, realize that it is going to be financially impossible to keep such a cuckoo going, as he eats for four normal children. Most sumo candidates come from the country villages. A fat boy is most likely to be accepted if he has already shown an ability to wrestle at home or in school.

From the moment a boy is accepted by the trainer, his life is centred on the sumo ring. He is stuffed and stuffed until he has grown accustomed to eating ten times the amount of his normal fellows. No training diet for him! He may drink all the rice-wine and beer he can swallow, for both are body-building. At the same time as putting on rolls of fat, he trains the muscles beneath with gymnastics, judo and weight-lifting.

Baseball has become a favourite sport in Japan. It was introduced by the American occupation forces, caught on and spread like wildfire. Now, in every village, you can see little boys, padded gloves in one hand, chucking balls at each other and dreaming of one day being good enough to play for Tokyo's famous Giants. But not even baseball can compete with sumo, which is so old that bouts were being held to entertain the Mikado's court at the time that gladiators fought in the arena in Rome.

Neither the rules of sumo nor the show have changed since then, and neither film stars nor pop-singers have been able to dethrone the mastodons of sumo as Japan's popular idols and heroes. There are magazines, full of pictures to cut out and frame, devoted solely to the training, fights and private life of these great bears. You read with horror or admiration of the quantities of rice or fish or pork your idol can consume at a sitting. Their horoscopes are printed. People swarm round the wrestlers to get their autographs—they know enough to be able to write their names.

Japan is the only country to produce fighters using the French method of feeding Strasbourg geese for *pâté de foie gras,* and the result is that her wrestlers, like the geese, leave this world when still young. The life insurance people are very sceptical of the sumo wrestlers' health, but the public applauds them, as long as their hearts can go on pumping blood through the vast bodies. If the sumo giants knew Latin, which they don't, they could adapt the Roman gladiators' greeting and say: 'We who are to die young, salute you!'



The fight of two gods for the possession of the province of Shimane is the oldest legend concerning the origin of sumo wrestling. The first sumo match took place in the presence of the Emperor Suinin in the second century AD. In the eighth century wrestling was made a part of court ceremonies, for which athletes were conscripted from all parts of the country. Warriors studied and practised sumo as an art to be used in hand-to-hand fights on the battlefield, and later the samurai—the warrior caste—were trained in sumo. In the fifteenth century it was established as a professional sport

The enduring background of Japanese life





A Japanese garden is designed to follow the natural contours of the landscape. In summer all the doors of the house are removed and the garden becomes an extension of the house

The Meiji Shrine in Tokyo was completed in 1920, and is one of the holiest places of pilgrimage in Japan. The Iris Garden *left* forms part of the extensive grounds of the shrine; more than a hundred varieties of Japanese irises are grown there. On the anniversary of the Emperor Meiji's birthday ancient court music and dances are performed in front of the sanctuary

Mount Fuji, the highest mountain in Japan, rises to a height of 12,388 feet, and even in summer the snow never entirely disappears. In July and August every trail is crowded with climbers. The volcano has not erupted since 1707, when ash covered Tokyo, seventy-five miles away



Worshippers at an ancient Shinto shrine in Kamakura, the capital of Japan from 1192 to 1333. Shinto, 'the way of the gods', is basically nature and ancestor worship, whose most important principle is ritual purity. Shinto shrines are simple: they usually face south, and consist of a hall for public worship and an inner sanctuary reserved for the priests. The worshipper first purifies his hands and mouth with water. On entering the sacred precincts, he attracts the attention of the deity by ringing bells and clapping his hands. He then bows and makes his prayer

It takes about two hours to shoot the rapids of the Kiso river, which rises in the Japanese Alps and winds through the fertile Nobi plain. Steep, forest-clad mountains enclosing intensively cultivated valleys are the main features of the Japanese landscape. The swiftly flowing rivers provide the water for irrigation and electric power



Mount Fuji can be seen in all its splendour from the Miho peninsula. This bank of sand has always been a favourite subject for Japanese artists



Women divers from Mikimoto's Pearl Island gather oysters for pearl culture from the sea bed. The skill is passed down from mother to daughter



Buddhism was introduced to Japan via China in the sixth century and is today the major religion. The Hokke-Ji Temple, which lies just outside the city of Nara, was founded in the eighth century by the Empress Komyo to be the main convent of nuns. Its chief object of veneration is a statue of the eleven-headed Kwannon, the goddess of mercy. Nara was founded in 710 AD, and for seventy-four years was the first permanent capital of Japan. During this period Chinese civilization exerted great influence on Japanese life, and the capital, with its magnificent palaces, temples and shrines, was the centre of a brilliant and cultivated society

Nearly 300 islands and many more islets of black volcanic tufa and white sandstone are scattered over the sixty square miles of Matsushima Bay on the eastern coast of Honshu. Gnarled pine trees cling to the scanty soil of the Matsushima or Pine Islands, which have been battered into fantastic shapes by sea, wind and rain. Although few are inhabited, most of the islands have been charted and given names which illustrate their strange resemblances, such as Trunk of Peony, Blue Eels, and Entry of the Buddha into Paradise. On one of the islands stands the Godaido Temple; on Oshima, caves chiselled out of the rocks contain Buddhist images and were once used as retreats







Japanese children spend six years at school *left* learning more than 1,000 basic signs of their complex language. On their days off they may go to the Nara Park *right*, where more than 800 deer, sacred to the Kasuga Shrine, tamely roam among young visitors

A Japanese bride. Weddings are held at the bridegroom's home or in a temple. Marriages are often arranged through a go-between

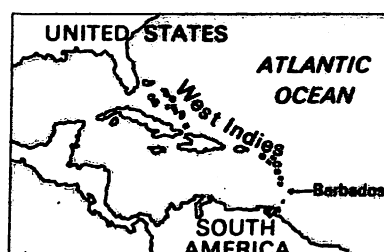
Women wearing the kimono, vividly coloured or subdued according to the wearer's age, are still seen in Tokyo, more often in the smaller streets than in the main centres

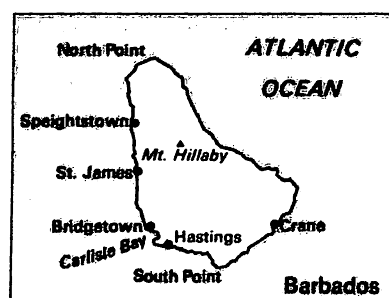


A village street on one of the hundreds of tree-covered islands in the Inland Sea—now a national park—which lies between Honshu and the large islands of Shikoku and Kyushu. Some of the islands are densely populated; their inhabitants are mainly fishermen and farmers

Winter in Barbados

The breezes on Barbados blow fresh from Africa, giving the island the perfect climate for a life of lazy enjoyment. The sugar-cane plantations and the flying-fish fleet belong to the Caribbean, but the harbour police in bell bottoms, the undulating roads and the Sunday formality call to mind the England of a century ago





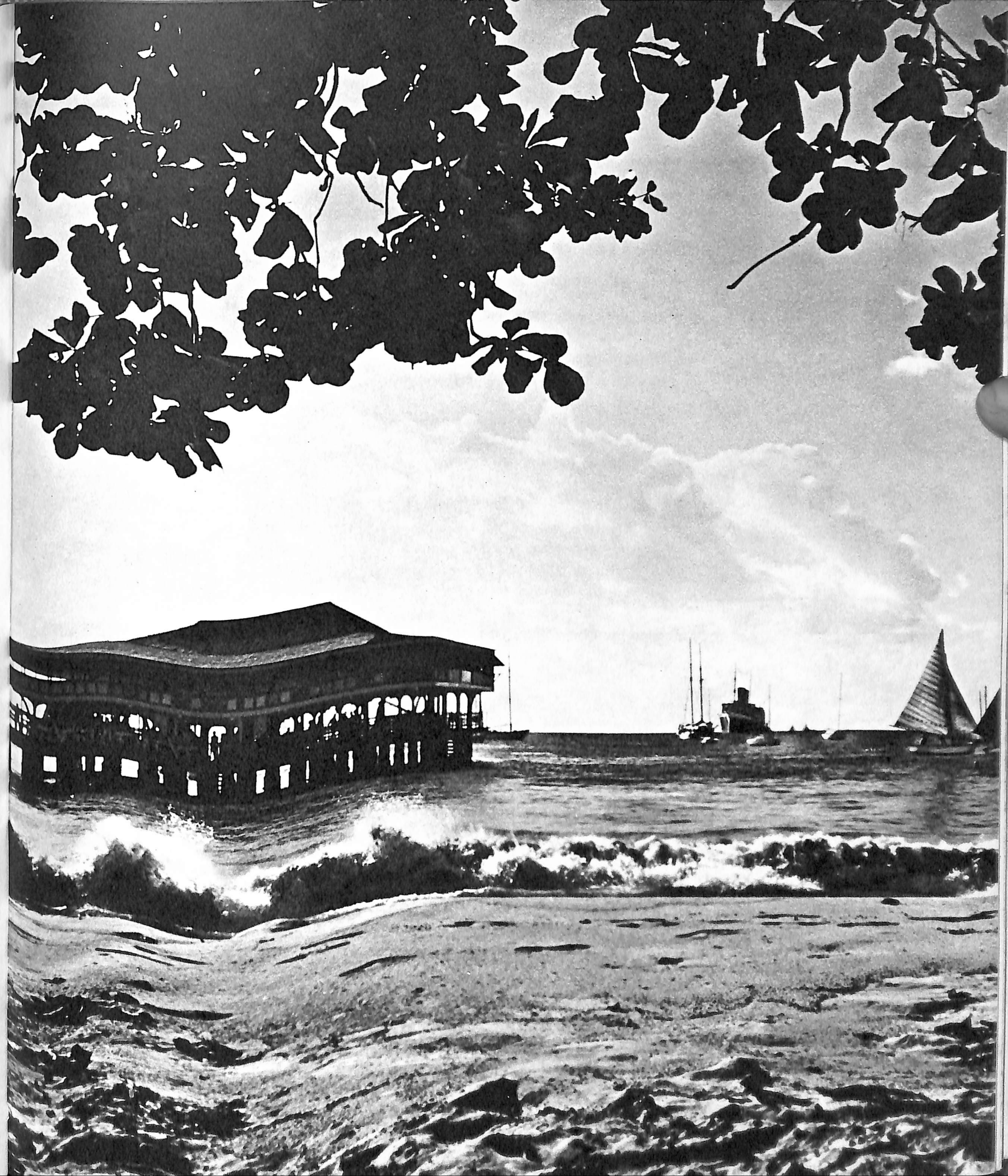
LETTERS TO Barbados often take a long time to arrive. Eventually they turn up having been wrongly directed to Bermuda or the Bahamas. I even had letters arrive by way of Barbuda, which, one would have thought, even the post office had never heard of. Still, though there are indeed smaller islands in the West Indies, Barbados, a little larger than the Isle of Wight—roughly the size of the ideal state defined by the Greeks as being not much more land than can be seen from the top of a hill—is sufficiently remote and inconsequential to be missed unless you look carefully.

The most easterly of the West Indian islands, Barbados has a subtropical climate tempered by trade wind breezes for the better part of the year. There is no land between it and the coast of Africa, 3,000 miles away, so the air arrives rejuvenated and unused. It is eleven flying hours from England, or nine days by banana boat; five hours by air from New York, or weeks if you take one of those ever-stopping Caribbean tour ships.

The island was named by the Portuguese, possibly after the bearded fig trees which covered the island when they visited in 1536. It was a waterless, uninhabited coral plague spot, and the Portuguese, considerately leaving a herd of pigs behind, went on to more profitable islands. The British, not so particular, took possession of the figs, pigs and mosquitoes in 1625, and the island remained a British colony until independence in November, 1966. It still raises excellent pork, although the fig trees and mosquitoes are almost extinct.

The Britishness of Barbados, bougainvillea-smothered and surmounted by royal palms, is perhaps one of the neatest anachronisms to be found in the world today. The immaculately kept Victorian Gothic Church of England, with orchids around the door, is crammed to capacity every Sunday with devout Negro Christians heavily intoning 'Rock of Ages'—about as un-English a scene as one could find. In England the churches are largely in bad repair and appealing for restoration funds to sparse congregations who take their Christianity as timidly as they sing their hymns. But Barbados, with its memories of Nelson and Trafalgar, its Dover,

The pier owned by the Barbados Aquatic Club reaches out into Carlisle Bay. Before the new Bridgetown Harbour was opened in 1961, steamers used to anchor in the bay while small boats entered the Careenage harbour



Hastings and Brighton, its plum pudding and mince tarts under faded Canadian Christmas trees in the blazing sun of Christmas Eve, is so traditionally Anglo-Saxon that it hurts.

Barbados has two drive-in cinemas, one theatre, and no vice rackets to speak of. It has no casino, no smart set and no artists' colony. But it does have fine white coral-sand beaches, a safe warm sea which some consider the most therapeutic in the world, and divine weather almost the whole year round.

The prospect of this wind-fanned leisure in the sun made the island seem ideally suited to my London-born, London-domiciled, and show-business-exhausted family. One cold, wet autumn Sunday, we decided to spend the cold half of the next few years among the bearded figs, coconut palms and waving sugar cane of frangipani-scented Barbados. Within four months we had marooned ourselves in a white nineteenth-century colonial wedding cake of a house, surrounded by a couple of acres of bananas and citrus, and we were commuting daily to a beach hut a few miles away (no spot in Barbados is more than eight miles from the sea).



A fisherman examines his nets in the shallows. Barbados has a fishing fleet of over 300 boats, which catch more than 40,000 tons of fish each year. Flying fish and sea eggs (sea urchin roe) are local specialities

The desert-island routine of daily swimming and sunning, sustained by delicious imported Canadian chickens, big red American apples and beach-barbecued hamburgers of local beef, continued undisturbed for a while. Then, one day, we noticed that the island was inhabited by a quarter of a million other people; that it was, in fact, one of the most densely populated specks of land in the world.

Most transients in Barbados do not stay long enough each year to observe this fact or its consequences. They come for six recuperative weeks and spend them in their white coral houses facing the uncluttered sea, with a deep barrier of palms and hibiscus behind them to keep the local realities at bay. On the so-called Platinum Coast of St. James, where millionaires' beach houses squat cheek by jowl with decrepit shacks, the land is valued at about £18,000 an acre.

From Bridgetown, the capital, this costly ribbon development is continuous northward. Southward, toward Maxwell's Coast, property is more moderately priced. Here, a sun-dried, salt-sprayed wooden house on the beach may still be bought for about £10,000. Where there are so few acres and so many people suffering from land hunger, together with an increasing number of winter refugees from an affluent society, you are unlikely to pick up bargains.

However, our search for a winter home didn't take many weeks, thanks to either my rashness or my shrewdness. We were offered traditional plantation houses with holes in their tin roofs at about £10,000 apiece. We looked at beach shacks, ripe, we were assured, for development, and at miniature beach palaces which had been developed already at great expense by refugees like ourselves (only richer) who hadn't managed to get back after the first fine frenzy of enthusiastic building. In Barbados the age-old principle, that fools build for wise men to buy, applies trenchantly. Every season hundreds of dreamers scuttle around the island, and ten or so finish up as local property owners. Perhaps two or three develop the winter residential habit. The rest keep a large group of real-estate agents and half-commission beachcombers in business.

My basic house-buying technique has always been to look for some vanished millionaire's costly rambling folly and buy it cheaply, on the principle that it is too large for ordinary-sized human beings to live in. But on the island, apart from a

few gold-plated, two-bedroom, six-bathroom boxes on sand, there isn't much available in the way of millionaires' follies.

I was, however, offered Farley Hill—'one of the finest great houses in the West Indies, with unique historical background'—for a mere £14,000. I could have fifteen bedrooms, a ballroom, a forty-foot dining room, a library, a 'gracefully hung' mahogany staircase, a garage for four of my cars, loose boxes for six of my horses and rooms for ten of my servants.

It sounded very practical at first. The idea of possessing thirteen acres complete with monkeys and mongooses, and hares and pigeons for my four sons to shoot, not to mention sad migrating teal, plover and snipe, had great occupational possibilities. I had always wanted a drive of royal palms several of which had actually been planted by royalty. Though the estate, I was informed in a superior tone, had 'never been utilized commercially', I might be degenerate enough to consider introducing a profitable banana plantation. I might even be enough of a cad to convert the stately home into a hotel. 'When,' I asked the agent as we drove through the sugar cane, 'was it last lived in?'

The agent brushed off this irrelevance like a sand fly and pointed out that only a year or two ago the place had been taken over by an American film company. 'And you know how particular they are about their plumbing arrangements,' he concluded triumphantly.

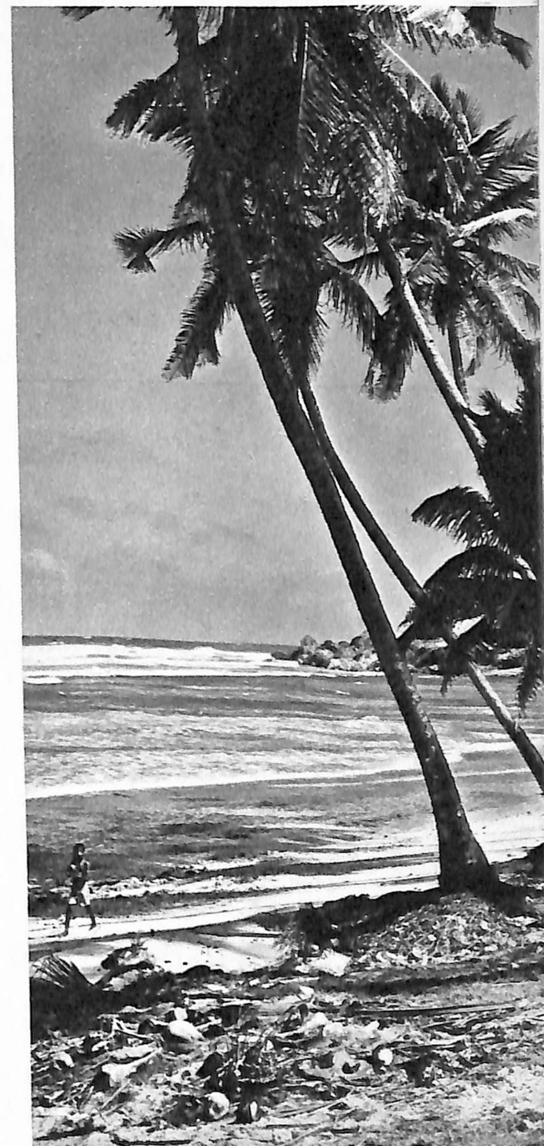
As we looked over the mouldering wreck of termite-ridden magnificence, the agent suggested that there might still be a few peacocks around the place. That killed it for me. Quite apart from the fact that most of the floors had fallen in, and that a large portion of the ceiling detached itself from the rafters as we sidled through the ghostly corridors, peacocks have never been my bird.

What we finished up with was a sensible colonial house with four bedrooms, two bathrooms, high ceilings and thick walls. It stood practically opposite the gates of the governor's palace; very convenient, should my wife ever need to borrow a cup of rice.

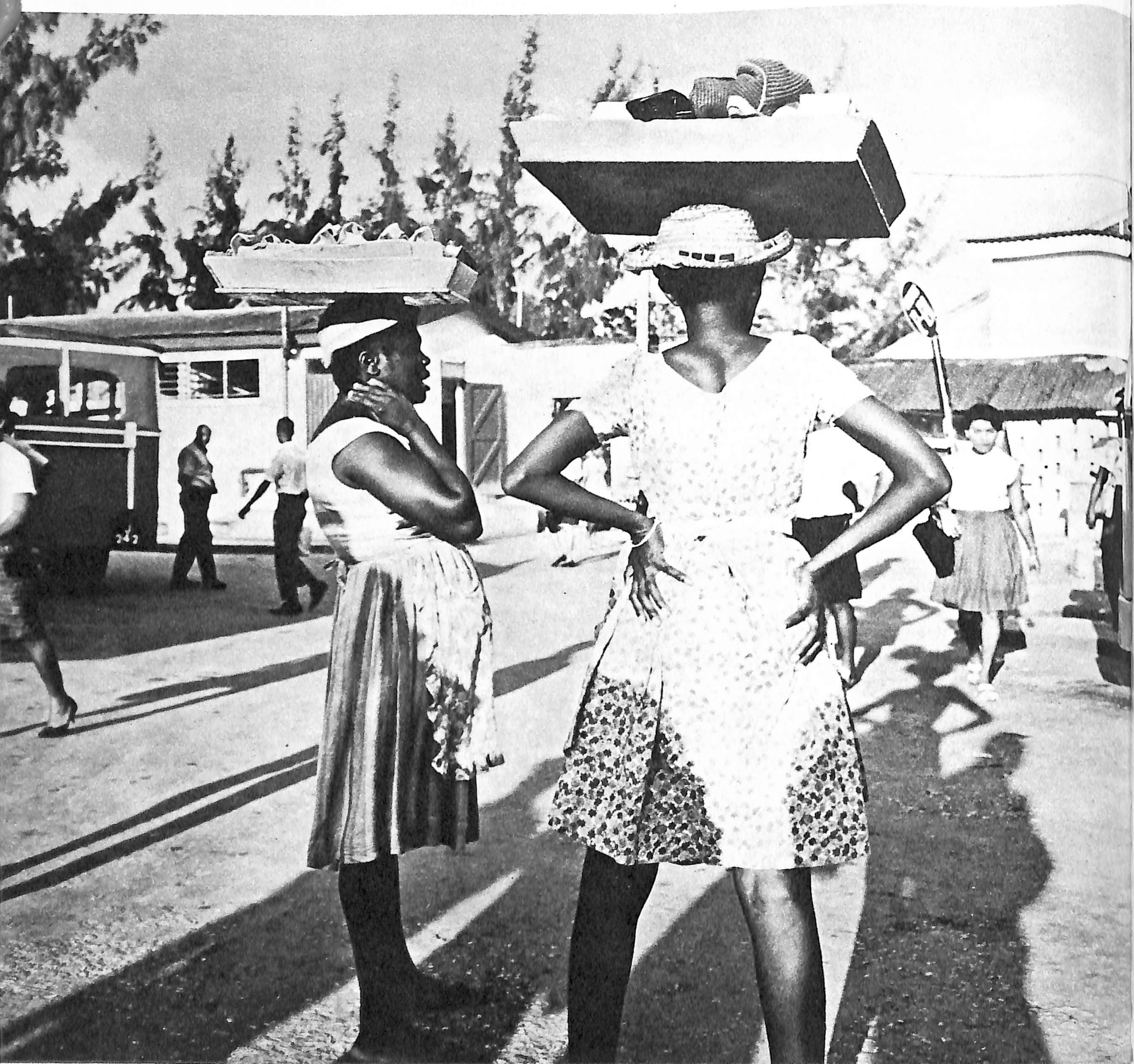
Our house seemed inexpensive in local terms when we bought it for about £8,000. Costs of labour were lower than in England, and it seemed that, with all our converting, we would still make only a reasonable outlay. In fact, you need about three times as much labour in Barbados as you do in England, partly because of the climate and partly because, when wages are low, workers, not without reason, feel less inclined to kill themselves on the job. So that in the long run, labour costs are about the same as they are at home in England. Every screw and plumbing fitment, however, has to be imported. This adds agents' commissions, transport costs and a generous profit to the merchant.

Still, for four months of the year, we told ourselves, we had continuous sunshine, and even the combined fortunes of the Whitneys and Conrad Hilton can't buy more than that.

The imperial sunset over Barbados is very beautiful. Sold to North American tourists on the appeal of being 'Little England', the Colony has its miniature Houses of Parliament in Trafalgar Square, very Scottish-baronial and shaded by palms. In Parliament, Coloured and Negro representatives rule their rum-drinking (three distilleries, fifty brands), working-class country. Except for the occasional politician, the Barbadians are an unviolent people. They sometimes machete their



Coral reefs encircle Barbados and sometimes extend three miles out to sea. Martin's Bay on the rugged eastern coast is within walking distance of Bathsheba, a seaside resort and home of the flying-fish fleet



In the bus station at Bridgetown passengers can buy sweets, nuts and fruit from the women who carry trays of their wares on their heads. The island is covered by a network of excellent roads

friends when rummed, but otherwise give very little trouble to the police, an excellent force which wears either the smart red, white and blue of days when those colours were synonymous with imperial reliability, or the costume of Nelson's *Victory*.

The eccentricities of Barbadian Britishness result partly from the slacker tempo which the tropical midday sun imposes even upon Englishmen, and partly from the fact that seventy-five per cent of the Barbadian English are almost pure West African Negro. Surprisingly, there are no mad dogs in Barbados, but religious manias are frequent. This may well result from the way in which a West African people have been tightly fitted into the guilt-edged costume of Anglicanism. After three centuries of skirt lengthening and armhole adjustment, the fancy dress appears to fit quite well. The Christianity of Barbados has a charming nineteenth-century quality which honestly disapproves of excessive kite flying at Easter and is offended by a meagre parade of overdressed carnival queens at a time of year when the spring fertility rites of a darker homeland are unconsciously remembered. The black Barbadians are serious, shrewd, thrifty and highly status-conscious, but they do not allow Christian embargoes on kites to inhibit the sex life of the island.

The polygamous traditions brought from Africa and encouraged by eighteenth-century slave owners have left behind the feeling that a man is entitled to as many common-law wives as he can cope with physically, if not financially—hence the island's productivity in beautiful children. The locals blame this productivity upon sugar cane and flying fish. The milts and roes of the fish are considered aphrodisiac, and privacy is provided by the vast acreage of tall canes.

The 12,000 or so 'pure' white Barbadians, who constitute a minority of about five per cent of the island's population, like to think of themselves as the lineal descendants of the first white planter-masters, the English aristocrats or gentlemen yeomen-farmers who, being younger sons, were forced to the Indies to seek their fortunes. The term 'plantocrat' is used, evoking an image of a white-suited, topeed master class, riding beautifully kept ponies through the cane fields in the few weeks of the year when this deliciously lazy crop requires much attention; the rest of the time downing their planter's punch on the hibiscus-bordered verandas of their gracious mahogany-furbished great houses. In fact, the average white Barbadian farmer lives in a small bungalow and plays a good deal of bridge. His ancestors were probably transported, or 'Barbadoed', away from mother England. Barbados may well be 'Little England', as the travel brochure puts it, but it is an England still under the Dickensian shadow of that thin spirit of Time Past, the ghost of British colonialism.

Yet today it is only the merest ghost. Colour discrimination has become impossible, except in a couple of archaic clubs and in the homes of the most backward-looking local whites. Among the blacks, too, there are still reactionary patterns of social exclusiveness. Too many of all colours still regard pallid skin pigmentation as a status symbol. Among a mere quarter of a million people, mostly workers, with a small middle class, there is a large number of social groupings and castes, and social life in Barbados is complex indeed. In Barbados, we solved the problem by ignoring it. Our friends were the sort of people who would be our friends wherever we lived. In Barbados, refreshingly, most of them were Negro.

DAVID REED

The mighty Amazon

Beginning as an icy rivulet high in the Andes, the Amazon flows for nearly 4,000 miles through the steaming jungle of South America. The traveller who traces its course today feels the same insignificance before its immensity as did Francisco de Orellana, the Spanish conquistador who first made the journey more than four centuries ago





Birthplace of a giant: an icy trickle from the foot of a glacier high in the Andes is the source of the Amazon

HIGH IN THE snow-swept Andes of Peru, more than three miles above sea level, a blue-tinted glacier clings to the face of a mountain. Wind shrieks through icy crags, and every few moments the glacier rumbles and booms as it inches its way down the slope. From the lower edge of the icefield, a tiny rivulet tumbles out. It looks like any mountain stream, yet this is the beginning of the greatest river in the world. For here, on the frozen roof of South America, only seventy miles from the Pacific Ocean, the titanic Amazon is born.

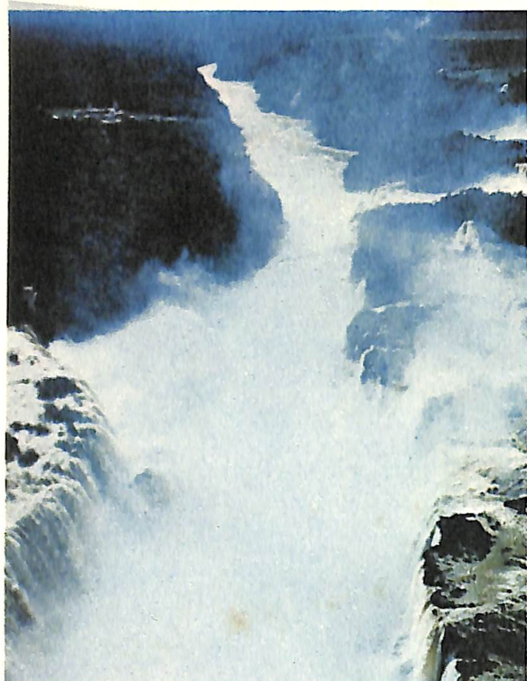
Ice-cold and crystal-clear, the Amazon at its source is only ankle-deep. But as it cascades down, other rivulets race to join it. It picks up speed. Soon it is a fully-fledged river, churned muddy brown by its furious descent. For hundreds of miles, it roars through mountain gorges. Then, with explosive force, it bursts into the green hell of the jungle below.

As the Amazon surges across the torrid wilderness, hundreds of tributaries pour their waters into it. Torrential rains swell the flood. Now the Amazon is no longer a river; it is, instead, a moving inland sea that drains nearly half of South America. The Amazon knows no channels; it tolerates no obstacles; it rips away its banks with brutal fury to pour its turbid waters across thousands of square miles of jungle, drowning and obliterating everything that stands in its way. In places, its ultimate banks are sixty miles apart; the main channel itself is often so wide that you cannot see the far shore. So great is the river's power that even when it reaches the Atlantic, the Amazon refuses to die: it floods the ocean with fresh, muddy water for up to a hundred miles offshore.

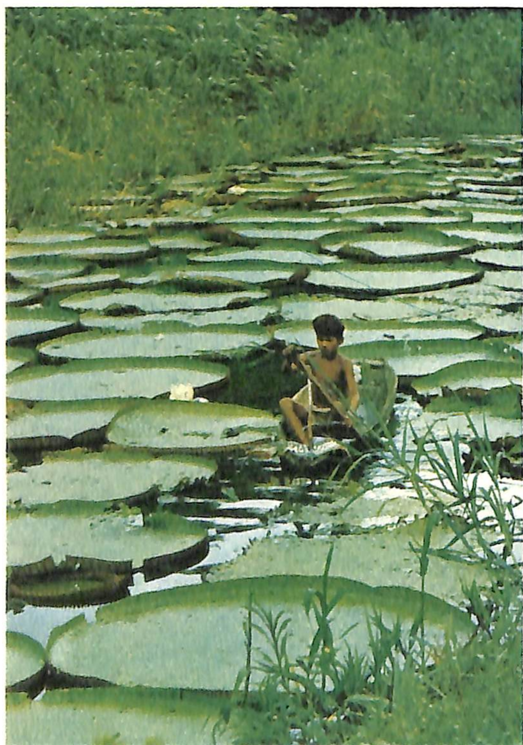
Everything about the Amazon is colossal. Its basin, estimated at 2·7 million square miles, spans six countries—most of Brazil, as well as portions of Bolivia, Peru, Ecuador, Colombia and Venezuela. Only the Nile, 4,145 miles long, has a greater overall length than the Amazon, estimated at 3,900 miles. And the Amazon is by far the world's longest river for navigation by ocean-going ships. Vessels make regular voyages all the way across Brazil and into Peru, a total distance of 2,300 miles.

A typical Amazon river dwelling—a fisherman's palm-thatched hut in a tiny clearing hacked out of the wilderness. Abandoned clearings are swiftly swallowed by the jungle





Dropping a height of three miles from the top of the Andes, and fed by innumerable torrents, the Amazon gathers force for its long journey



After its headlong rush from the roof of South America, a more sedate Amazon enters an exotic world rich in plant and animal life. The giant water-lily, *Victoria amazonica,* has huge leaves with upturned margins; it was first discovered in these waters in 1838

Of the Peruvian rivers which form the Amazon proper, the Marañón is considered by many experts to be the true parent stream. To see the birthplace of the Amazon, therefore, I set out by car from Lima, and headed up the Pacific slope of the Andes. Just over the continental divide, at an altitude of 15,350 feet, is Lake Santa Ana, with mountains rising almost perpendicularly from the water's edge. Cascading down from the west into the lake is a small brook. I followed the stream up the mountain on foot—past a second lake, then a third and fourth. Finally, I came to a fifth lake, unnamed. There, at an altitude of 16,075 feet, I found that tiny stream pouring out from the foot of a glacier—the ultimate headwaters of the Amazon.

Next morning, accompanied by three cowboys, I set out on horseback to follow the infant river on the first leg of its long journey to the Atlantic. For hours we rode along the foot of a row of towering glacial peaks known as the Seven Caballeros. Springs bubbled from every slope, and waterfalls cascaded hundreds of feet down rock cliffs. Twice we forded the river, here knee-deep to the horses. One of the cowboys played sad, lonely tunes on a harmonica. Once we came near a herd of llamas; once, too, a condor circled overhead. But otherwise it was a silent, empty land. Late in the afternoon, we arrived at a sheep ranch on the shores of Lake Lauricocha, where we spent the night.

From Lauricocha, last in a chain of lakes leading down from Santa Ana, the Marañón-Amazon emerges as a mature river. For the next several hundred miles the river tumbles through inaccessible gorges, unnavigable even by raft or canoe. So I left the Marañón and set out eastward across the Andes, first on horseback, then by bus, and finally in a small plane, bound for Iquitos and the jungle.

At Iquitos, in the north-eastern corner of Peru, the Amazon proper has already been formed by a union of the Marañón and Ucayali rivers. Now there are no more cataracts or rapids. As it passes Iquitos, situated on a bluff overlooking the river, the young giant is several miles wide.

To the traveller just down from the Andes, the jungle climate comes as a jolt. Temperatures exceeding a hundred degrees are rare. At night one sleeps under a light blanket. But the humidity is awful. Everything drips moisture. Clothes, books and papers are continuously damp. Worse still is the inescapable monotony: every day is as sticky as the last. Soon even the most energetic visitor yawns, mutters *'No importa'*, and acquiesces to the snail's pace of life in the tropics.

Iquitos, though 2,300 miles from the Atlantic, is jokingly called 'Peru's Atlantic port'. It is regularly visited by ocean vessels. One, the *Venimos*, a month out of New York, was tied up at the wharf while I was there. Getting a ship up the river takes all the skill its pilots can muster. There are virtually no buoys or other navigation aids but, even if there were, they wouldn't help much. The Amazon is so powerful that it continually creates new routes. A pilot will steer to the left of an island on one voyage, then to the right on the second. On the third voyage the island might have disappeared.

At Iquitos I hired a small outboard motor-boat with a pilot, and set out down-river. As we put-putted along, breathtaking panoramas unfolded. The sky was brilliant blue, and the muddy, red surface of the river shimmered in the sunshine. Every few minutes, a freshwater porpoise leapt from the water, then fell back with



Fishermen catch freshwater as well as saltwater fish—sharks, tarpons, and sword-fish—as far as 2,000 miles up-river. The Amazon is also the home of caymans, electric eels and fierce carnivorous piranhas

The Amazon drains an area of about 2½ million square miles. Immense stretches of the river basin are dotted with islands, some large, some little more than floating clumps of marsh grass, divided only by narrow channels or *igarapés*

a splash. And, all the while, the vivid green jungle—a hundred feet high and so dense I could see only a few yards into it—moved past in silent, savage splendour.

Gazing at the wilderness, one feels as if one were looking into eternity itself. The entire region has scarcely changed since the beginning of time. There is not a single bridge or dam on the main river. People live only along the edge of the Amazon and its tributaries, in little clearings hacked from the forest, where they hunt, fish and gather rubber, cacao and nuts.

Fifty miles downstream from Iquitos, the pilot headed up a small tributary, the Manita, and I went ashore. A guide walked ahead to hack out a path with a machete. The ground underfoot was like sponge rubber—one walks on a mass of sodden leaves. The jungle was roofed over, like a great cathedral.

Enormous trees, among them cedars and mahoganies, soared upwards for a hundred feet or more. Occasionally a ray of sunshine dazzled down through the canopy, but otherwise the jungle floor was immersed in twilight. Monkeys squeaked, gorgeous blue butterflies flitted past, birdcalls filtered down and I



Large-scale agriculture is unknown. The Amazonians and their usually large families live precariously off what is grown in jungle clearings. Sugar-cane is popular because it gives energy and can be used to make *cachaca*, a rum-like drink

caught glimpses of humming-birds. Elsewhere in the jungle one sees gaudy raucous macaws, comical toucans with huge beaks, parrots, parakeets and bell-birds that let out ear-piercing calls which sound like a dozen hammers beating on anvils.

Not a breeze stirs. The air is heavy with dankness and decay, mixed with the intoxicating fragrance of exotic fruits and flowers. Orchids bloom on tree trunks, and at times clusters of other brilliantly hued flowers can be glimpsed. Charles Darwin called this jungle 'one great wild, untidy, luxuriant hot-house'.

At nightfall the jungle, seen from the river, is a wall of blackness. Frogs, insects, birds and monkeys raise a furious uproar. All the latent horror of the jungle swells to a crescendo. Armies of unseen snakes and other reptiles are on the move. One evening, as our boat glided through the tropical night, I shone a torch at the river-bank. Every few moments, a pair of red eyes glowed back, like the coals of hell. These were caymans, the Amazonian counterpart of the crocodile and alligator. The river seemed to be alive with them.

Apart from the caymans, the jungle horrors, though real, are seldom seen. Some Amazon insects are truly awesome—spiders with bodies two inches wide and hairy legs seven inches long, wasps with a five-inch wing-span. One particularly revolting individual, known as the elephant beetle, has a body the size of a tea-cup and a long curving tusk. That is distressing, but the creature flies, too. When it hits a window screen, it sounds as if someone has thrown a stone. Even worse are the ants. One ant, known in Peru as the *isula,* is over an inch long; and its poisonous sting can put a man in agony for hours and, it is said, kill an infant.

Wild yarns are told of Amazonian monsters, yet the truth is fantastic enough. Among the jungle creatures, the anaconda, up to twenty-six feet in length and the longest snake in the Western Hemisphere, is capable of swallowing a deer whole. More feared by river dwellers are the bushmaster, which averages seven feet in length, and the somewhat smaller fer-de-lance. Highly venomous, both are pit vipers, guided to their prey by the victim's body heat.

Leaving the Manita, I continued down the Amazon in a speed-boat, accompanied by two French-Canadian missionary priests. As we passed the mouth of one of the Amazon's great tributaries, the Napo, another Amazonian phenomenon appeared—a floating island. These islands, many of them with big, living trees, are torn loose from the banks by the rampaging current and swept along down-stream.



To the tourist the banana canoes of Manaus, waiting to discharge their cargo on to launches going down-river, are a colourful sight. But to the local inhabitants bananas are no substitute for their once-thriving rubber trade. Before the development of Malaya, Manaus was the world's supplier of natural rubber

Outwardly the Amazon is as peaceful as a millpond, and the traveller is tempted to plunge in for a swim. But the river is filled with unpleasant creatures, including the piranha fish, ranging from a few inches to more than a foot in length, with bulldog-like jaws and razor-sharp teeth. Stories of people and animals reduced to skeletons in minutes by these fish are legion, yet I never found anyone with first-hand information on that score. What the river people particularly fear is a giant catfish, six to nine feet long and weighing as much as 200 pounds. Often, natives say, swimmers are pulled under by these monsters, never to be seen again. The Amazon is also infested with electric eels, which deliver stunning shocks, and with poisonous sting-rays. Then there is an insufferable little fish (called the *candirú* in Brazil and the *canero* in Peru) that insinuates itself into body orifices. A series of spines in the fish's body prevents it from being pulled out; often it has to be cut out.

The upper Amazon is Indian country. Even today, some tribes have had no



Amphibious planes are the only alternative transport to boats along the Amazon and its tributaries. No roads cut through the jungle to link even the main towns. The planes ferry passengers, animals, mail, medicine, petrol and equipment between riverside settlements

contact with the outside world. Here live the Jivaros, once noted for shrinking the heads of their enemies to the size of a man's fist—a practice stamped out by the governments of Peru and Ecuador.

At an encampment of Yagua Indians near Iquitos, I saw a demonstration of the nine-foot blow-guns with which the Yaguas hunt birds and animals. Each man took a dart the size of a small piece of straw, twirled cotton round one end to make it airtight—then *whoosh!* and the dart would be quivering in a tree trunk fifty yards away. Because the weapon is silent, a man with a blow-gun can pick off five or six monkeys in a tree before the others are frightened off.

After a day's journey downstream from San Pablo in a dug-out canoe, we went ashore at a little clearing to visit my skipper's brother, a barefoot, ragged man, who greeted us with dignified cordiality. His wife killed a chicken, and we feasted by the light of a paraffin lamp while American jazz blared from a transistor radio. Like most of the river people, the man ekes out a living from 'slash and burn' agriculture. He cuts down a few acres, then burns it off for planting. But the jungle soil is poor and farming methods are so primitive that only one or two crops can be grown. Then the clearing is left and a new one is hacked from the wilderness.

The man also gathers wild rubber. He rises before dawn and stops at each rubber tree to cut the bark and insert a small cup that catches the milk-coloured latex as it oozes out. Later in the day, he gathers the latex and then returns home, where, with a wooden paddle, he works the coagulating latex into an oval ball which weighs up to 200 pounds. When enough balls are made, he sells them to the local



Ocean-going ships from London, New York, Genoa and Hamburg navigate the difficult waters of the Amazon as far as Iquitos in Peru, 2,300 miles up-river. They bring coal, oil and machinery, and take wood, nuts, rubber, sisal, cacao, vegetable oils, hides and skins

trader. Like most river people he is so deeply in debt to the trader that he rarely sees cash.

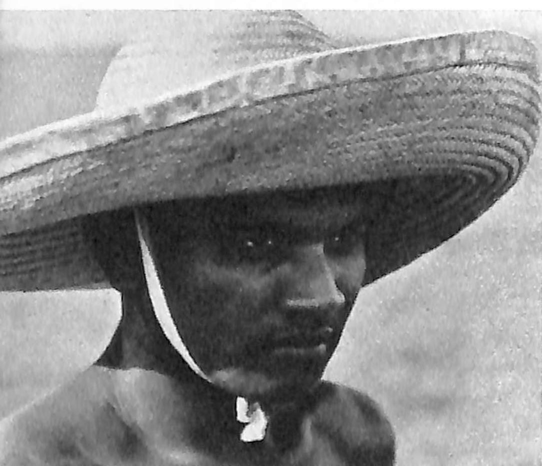
A few days later, I entered Brazil at the border town of Benjamin Constant, and from there flew to Manaus, on the left bank of the Rio Negro, a 1,400-mile-long tributary of the Amazon and itself one of the world's great rivers. Fantastic Manaus, situated in the middle of the wilderness 1,000 miles from the sea, is a thriving community of nearly 200,000. No roads lead to Manaus and perhaps none ever will, yet it is a town of ten-storey buildings, air-conditioned houses and offices, crowded docks and hurrying traffic. On the waterfront, men in dug-out canoes paddle past freighters from Liverpool, Hamburg and New York. The people of Manaus seem to be among the thirstiest in the world—one of the town's biggest exports is empty beer bottles, which are sent back to São Paulo for refilling. All day long, the sky over Manaus is speckled with vultures who feast on mounds of garbage along the cobblestone streets. There is just a handful of street lights; and at night, amid a darkness akin to that of the near-by jungle, crowds gather to play roulette and to participate in voodoo rites.

Like a shooting star, Manaus rose to prominence during the nineteenth-century rubber boom. Garish palaces sprang up; an opera house, with crystal chandeliers and Italian marbles, opened its doors on New Year's Eve of 1896 to the golden voice of Enrico Caruso. Then an Englishman, Henry Wickham Steed, smuggled rubber seeds to England, which were eventually taken to the Far East. There, planted in orderly groves, the wild Amazonian trees flourished—so well that in time the

Amazon could no longer compete. The crash came in 1914. Fortunes disappeared as quickly as they had been made, and Manaus and other Brazilian river towns fell into decay. Since then Manaus has made a comeback. An oil refinery and several factories have been opened, and the opera house has been restored.

Setting out from Manaus in a chartered fifty-foot diesel launch, the *São Joaquim*, I soon came to the spectacular meeting of the inky waters of the Rio Negro with the now yellow Amazon. Like giants in a death struggle, the two rivers battle each other furiously. There is a sharp line where they surge together, marked with whirlpools and swirling debris. Several miles downstream, the line disappears. The Amazon has finally subdued its rival. Now the river, its main channel usually at least two miles wide, is topped with foaming white-caps, and the *São Joaquim* rolls almost to its beam ends.

Four days out of Manaus, we passed the mouth of another enormous tributary, the Tapajós, and headed upstream a short distance to the town of Santarém. Here I paid off the skipper of the *São Joaquim* and wangled a passage on a small river freighter, the *Euclides da Cunha*, bound for Belém, ninety miles from the Atlantic. The *Euclides*, loaded with foul-smelling balls of rubber, had no passenger accommodation; but, being by now an experienced Amazon traveller, I brought aboard a box of food and a case of beer and slung my hammock on the after deck.



This *vaqueiro* or cowboy works on a ranch on Marajó, an island as large as Switzerland, in the Amazon delta. His life is hard and the pay is low. With much of Marajó flooded, he and his pony are constantly in and out of the water

Two days later we passed the mouth of the last of the great tributaries of the Amazon proper, the Xingu, which is nearly 1,200 miles long. Now, swollen by the Xingu's flood, the Amazon was at its greatest volume. As we entered each new reach, there was nothing but water on the far horizon. Even the main channel was five to ten miles wide.

On the third day we entered the Amazon delta. The river was now breaking into dozens of distributaries. The delta is so vast that just one island, Marajó, is larger than Switzerland. As we made our way through the narrows, women and children paddled out to the ship in canoes, begging food, money, old clothes, anything. 'They are the poorest people in Brazil,' one of the crew muttered. They manage to grow a little rice, but it is impossible to raise much else because the land is flooded most of the year. In former times they eked out a living by selling firewood to passing boats. But now almost all river craft are diesel-powered, and so there is nothing left but to beg.

A golden dawn broke through the early-morning mists on the last day of the journey. The river was filled with sailing ships, many with red and orange sails.

As the *Euclides* neared Belém, black clouds collided in the sky, and for perhaps the hundredth time since the beginning of my Amazon journey a blinding storm beat down on the river. The pilot rang for half speed, and the ship slowed for a shoal. A member of the crew, drenched by rain, took soundings. Then, as we came safely over the shoal, the storm abated. The afternoon sun appeared faintly in the mist. A rainbow formed. Beneath it the skyline of Belém took shape.

Nearly two months had passed since the day when I stood knee-deep in snow in the Andes, watching as the Amazon trickled from the foot of a glacier. Now, on the other side of South America, the drama had reached its finale. The greatest river on earth was rolling through the delta and surging out into the Atlantic.

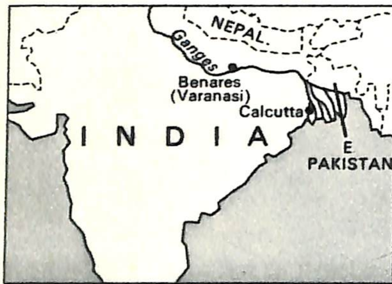
The Old Harbour of Belém, with its colourful river craft and eighteenth-century cathedral, may seem sleepy. But a new 1,360-mile motorway to Brasilia, the capital, is turning the delta port into a boom city



WILLIAM MACQUITTY

Benares, the holy city

On the banks of the Ganges rise the temples and palaces of Benares, the sacred city of the Hindus. Presided over by the god Siva, Benares is thronged by pilgrims from all over the Hindu world, who come to wash in the waters of the Ganges, to visit the city's many shrines, or to die and be cremated by the holy river



THE LOVELY and ancient city of Benares is the religious centre of the world for Hindus, and many thousands of pilgrims visit it each year from all parts of India. The city rises from the high northern bank on the outside curve of the wide Ganges, to form a magnificent panorama of buildings in many varieties of Indian architecture. Benares was founded some ten centuries before the birth of Christ. Standing between the two tributaries of the Ganges—Varuna to the north and Asi to the south—it was known as Varanasi. Today the Indians have restored the ancient name.

Along the waterside, stone steps line the entire river front, and interspersed between them are many ghats or landing places for the boats that ply on the waterway. Crowds of worshippers throng the steps, for the Hindus believe that the sacred waters can cleanse them of their sins. To die on the banks of the Ganges is the gateway to salvation for the pious Hindu, and the smoke from funeral pyres constantly rises from the Burning Ghats—the riverside terraces for cremation.

The funeral ceremony is simple. Four men carry the body, wrapped in thin cloth, on a stretcher, followed by the mourners. They take it down the steps and immerse it in the sacred river, then lay it on a small stack of dry twisted wood. The fire is lit, and the mourners squat silently round the pyre. Children stand by and watch, for Indians believe that no aspect of reality should be hidden from their children. The burning takes several hours. Finally water is poured on the hot ashes to cool them before they are scattered in the holy river. The mourners walk slowly away.

Hindus believe in a Universal Soul represented by a trinity of gods: Brahma the father, Vishnu the preserver, and Siva the destroyer, also the creator of generative power, signified by his phallic emblem, the Lingam. Together they account for the creation, preservation and destruction of the universe and all it contains. Siva is the presiding deity at Benares. His emblem is everywhere in the temples, worn smooth by the hands of the faithful, sprinkled with holy water from the Ganges and decorated with flowers. These simple rituals are part of everyday living, prayers of the people to the Almighty, the giver and taker of life.

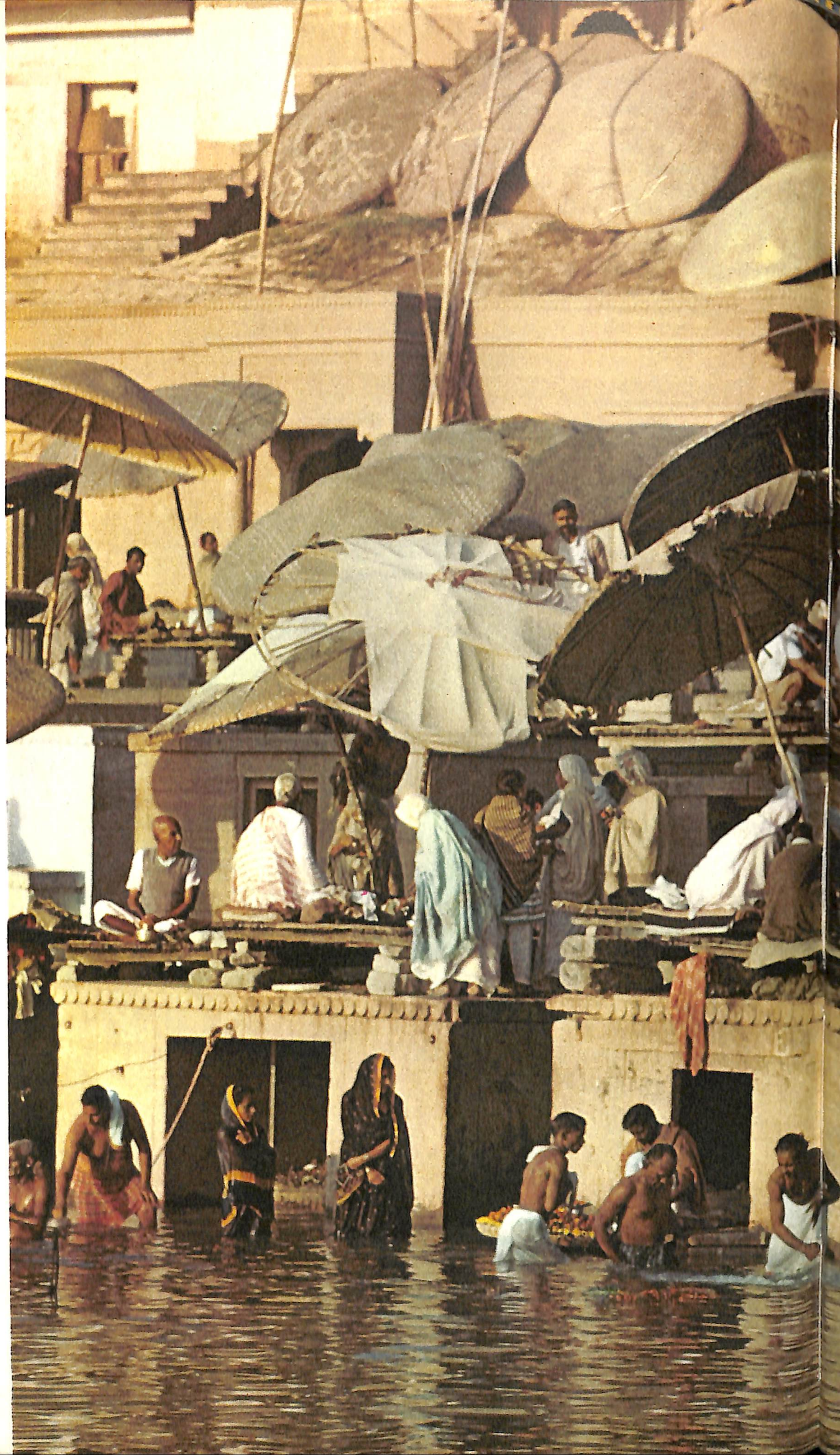
Life on the banks of the Ganges at Benares begins before dawn when pilgrims—men, women and children—crowd down to the river to wait for the rising sun. Some come in groups, some alone, all shrouded in their own thoughts of salvation, waiting for the moment when immersion in the sacred river will cleanse them of evil and wash their sins away. A lonely figure *right* sits motionless, waiting for the moment to enter the water. In front of him is a brass vessel to carry away some of the holy water to his home, which may be only a corner of a pavement in the great city. He wears a simple cloth to keep out the cold of the morning, and soon it too will be washed in the sacred river



Gradually the sun rises, and the river mists slowly lift to reveal the magnificent buildings *below* that have a solemnity unmatched by any city in the world. Many of them are the homes of wealthy Hindus who came here to be near the Ganges. Kites soar in the still air, and women and children wash in the slowly moving water

BENARES COMES TO LIFE

Soon after sunrise at Benares the great amphitheatre of ghats bursts into life. Under umbrellas made of dried palm leaves the more important devotees take their places. In the excited throng venerable Brahmins recite passages from the sacred books to attentive audiences while about them surge ash-smeared fakirs, sacred bulls and cows, beggars, goats, barbers, boatmen and the shrill-voiced sellers of sweetmeats. Priests dispense powders of many hues to pilgrims to mark their foreheads in veneration of the gods. Children sell yellow and orange marigolds, white jasmine and rose petals to adorn the temple images







JOY COLLIER

Cape Town in close-up

Sir Francis Drake called the Cape Peninsula, dividing the Atlantic and Indian Oceans, the 'fairest cape in the whole circumference of the earth'. Then it was a refreshment station where sailors collected fresh water, fruit and vegetables. Today it is the site of the modern city of Cape Town, of golden beaches and carefully tended vineyards



CAPE TOWN, which was once, in the words of an early Cape poet, 'at the farthest end of the earth', is now less than a day's comfortable travel away from Europe. The immeasurable distances of the past have been telescoped, and yet Cape Town still retains, at the heart of a thriving modern city, a sense of the time when it was the only European settlement in southern Africa.

A foothold of western civilization on the immense continent, it was small enough to be called the village, 'Die Vlek', and the few hundred white inhabitants were welded into a close relationship by their geographical remoteness. The strands of their family lives were woven together so closely that, even today, the old loyalties persist.

But at the same time Cape Town was never isolated. It was always cosmopolitan —a port of call for ships of every nation from the earliest times. And this dual character of a closely knit community which could absorb and mix with people of every kind and type is still in evidence, giving it an atmosphere both familiar and foreign.

The more obvious natural advantages—the mountains and the sea which frame the city with their indestructible beauty—should be looked at rather than described in words. The 'Kapenaar' knows, and the visitor can see for himself, why Cape Town is considered one of the loveliest cities in the world, most bountifully gifted by nature and climate. Since the expansion of the city itself has been contained by the rocky wall of Table Mountain and the sweep of the bay, city-dwellers have the unusual good fortune to remain within sight and sound of both the sea and the countryside.

Cape Town is a mixture of East and West, old and new, sedateness and enterprise hard to describe. The muezzin cries to the still-darkened sky from the many mosques of the Malay quarter; the gun booms at mid-day, an echo from the past, and a flock of pigeons flies up like a handful of confetti thrown in the air; gulls plane down Adderley Street crying into the wind, ships' sirens call from the harbour to remind us of the outside world, and on a fine, warm week-day afternoon a

Muizenberg, in False Bay, has one of South Africa's finest surfing beaches. Here the Indian Ocean is several degrees warmer than the Atlantic only a few miles away

stillness falls on the Gardens and outlying streets—the ghost of a once prevalent siesta. Loungers on the seats under the trees listen to the squirrels' chatter and the pigeons' coo, and nod. In spite of the hum and movement of a modern city there is a sense of rural calm.

For the past history of Cape Town still colours the present scene. There is no equation between venerable age and the out-worn, the *démodé* and the useless, for like a people or a nation, a town needs tradition. Houses built before the machine age by the hands of men with an inherited sense of architectural fitness have a particular value. They are irreplaceable. Although many of the old buildings of Cape Town are disappearing like sand-castles before the relentless tide of necessity, while vast blocks of flats and offices rise over their graves, something of the past has been saved. Thanks to the work of preservation societies and dedicated private individuals, enough remains to charm the eye, fascinate the interest, and bring back memories of a more gracious age.

Begun as a refreshment station for ships, Cape Town can still give refreshment of another kind, not only to its fortunate inhabitants, but to all who take refuge there from colder winters or tropical summers. And, the casual visitor apart, people of many different nationalities have been drawn to Cape Town like bees to a flowering kaffir plum tree, making it their permanent home and enriching it with their talents and industry.

Cape Town was centred from the first round a port, a garden and a fort, and these still remain at the heart of the modern city.

The Gardens themselves are a monument to the endeavours of the first Commander of the European settlement, Jan Van Riebeeck. At the head of Adderley Street, only a stone's throw from the principal shops, is this island of trees and flowers which the people of Cape Town have used from the beginning as a place of recreation. As you watch men and women of every class and colour sunning themselves or enjoying the scents and sights, and small children feeding the doves and squirrels, or as you saunter down Government Avenue and linger in the Alleys, it is not difficult to imagine you are in the old Company Garden—ground first cultivated by Jan Van Riebeeck after he had landed in 1652.

He came from one of the most civilized countries of Europe to a wilderness, and every nail, plank, spade and ounce of vegetable seed had been brought with him on the 200-ton fly-boat, the *Dromedaris.* The Dutch East India Company in whose service he had been for thirteen years, and which was one of the most powerful trading organizations the world of that time had known, had entrusted him with a dual task. He was to build a fortress to protect the harbour, and he had simultaneously to establish a vegetable garden to provide food for his own people and fresh rations for visiting ships.

Here, in the centre of what is now the city of Cape Town, he laboured with a small band of Europeans, 125 all told, including twenty-five women and children, eight gardeners, nine masons, and fifty-four armed soldiers and sailors, to grow the green peas, large beans, radishes, salad, fennel, wormwood, endive and other vegetables for supplying the Company's ships.

Looking at Cape Town's Castle from the Parade today, hedged in as it is by railway lines and dwarfed by modern buildings, it is difficult to imagine it as focal point of the early settlement. But it looks a solid and effective stronghold and

indeed as such fulfilled its purpose. Controlling harbour and land, it was neither besieged nor attacked, and no gun was ever fired from the walls in defence of the settlement. Only the charming gateway breaks the monotony of the walls, but once inside its character as seat of government and residence of the Governor, as well as a military headquarters, can be seen. The lovely Kat Balcony, the old sundial, the colonnaded arcade and the splendid rooms testify to its civic and military importance.

Construction began in 1666, only four years after Van Riebeeck left the Cape for Batavia, and was continued for more than a decade with an activity which fluctuated with the varied fortunes of war. The work of building required an effort from the whole population—even the Commander, his wife and small son lent a hand in carrying basket-loads of earth to the ramparts. To encourage the workmen at their task, eight casks of Cape-brewed beer and a hundred loaves were distributed, while each stalwart volunteer was presented with thirty-six rix dollars tied in a black bag. At the end of the first day's work an inauguration feast of roast beef and mutton was prepared for the volunteers from the carcasses of six sheep and two oxen.



Three centuries ago the Dutch first brought Malays to Table Bay from their Far Eastern possessions, because the Cape Colony was short of labour. The Malays, many of them successful tradesmen, remain strict Muslims, worshipping in mosques

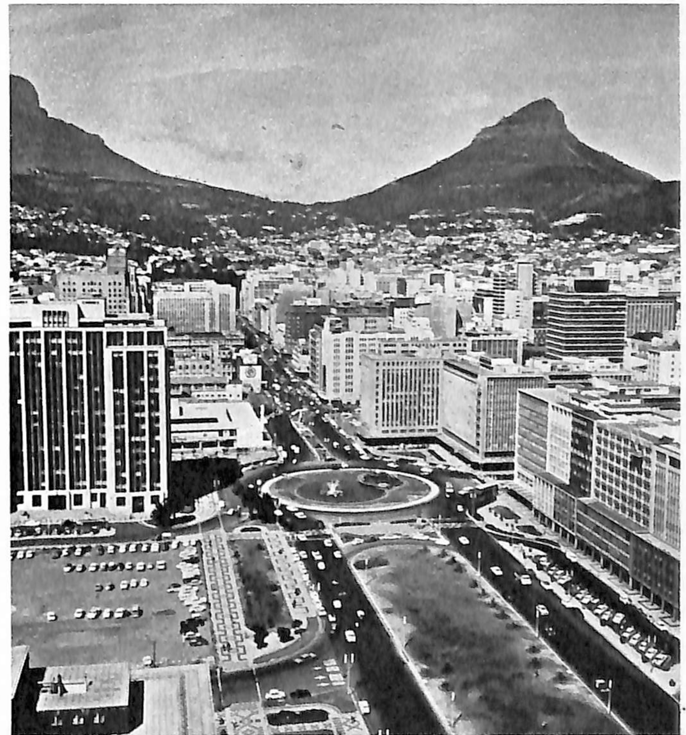
The main gateway, enclosed by a portcullis and bell-tower, was the work of the Cape's best-known governor, Simon Van der Stel who, for greater safety, closed the original sea entrance to the castle and opened the present one, designed after the old town gateway of Dordrecht in Holland. The bell rang to call the burghers to their first parade at the early hour of four in the morning, and tolled again at half-past nine at night to warn all those quartered in the castle that the gates were closing. The bell was rung by hand by two roundsmen or *rondgangers*, who took the time from an hour-glass which was checked against the sundials in the castle. The great bell sounded all the passing hours.

Perhaps the easy-going townspeople dozed away too many intervals of time, for besides the tolling bell, the official opening of the day and the curfew were marked by the loud firing of a gun from the Castle ramparts. The boom of the evening gun was a signal for the 'Burgher watch and Rattle', instituted by Governor Simon Van der Stel, to assemble outside the Burgher House and guard the town during the hours of darkness. These men carried muskets, lanterns and rattles, and patrolled the unlit streets crying out to the sleeping townsfolk '*Wel te rusten*' (sleep well). A later instruction told them that on 'Any disturbance or evil design being noted they were to spring rattles, and call loudly "Murder! Thieves!" and the like.' It was their task to prevent brawls and theft, succour the drunken sailor who might have fallen into a water conduit, lift the sluice-gates of the streams in stormy weather, and arrest the slave who was found wandering abroad without a pass from his master.

Although Table Bay may have been known as a harbour and anchorage from the time of the Phoenicians, only after Vasco da Gama discovered the sea route to the east round the 'Cape of Storms' did ships of all nations cast anchor to refill their water casks and cut bags of wild sorrel and mustard leaves for the scurvy-ridden seamen. Here in 1601 came a British sea captain, Sir James Lancaster, who, wishing to trade with the Hottentots living round the bay for cattle, was not deterred by his complete ignorance of their tongue. He went ashore and shouted at them in the 'catell's language' bellowing 'Baa' and 'Moo', which language 'the



Cape Town lies between the waters of Table Bay and a rocky range of mountains—Signal Hill on the right, Devil's Peak on the left, and between them massive Table Mountain. Unlike many of the world's other great cities, its situation prevents it from expanding shapelessly into the surrounding countryside. Even as a major harbour and industrial centre, it remains a compact city, conscious equally of the sea and of the nearness of rural life



The Heerengracht (Gentlemen's Walk), the broad boulevard spilling out of Adderley Street and leading to Table Bay, was once a typical Dutch Colonial thoroughfare with a canal flowing down its centre and flanked by trees. Its tall modern buildings reflect Cape Town's need to expand upwards



Wine making, the Cape's oldest industry, was started by Van Riebeeck, the 'father' of Cape Town, and developed by French Huguenot settlers, who lived in picturesque Dutch Colonial houses among their vines. Plentiful sunshine, and the loose, loamy, well-drained Cape soil in which vines thrive, have for nearly three centuries produced a great range of wines and liqueurs

people very well understood without an interpreter' and he was able to purchase 1,000 sheep and forty-two oxen.

Cape Province is famous for its vineyards. One of the greatest estates of the wine farmers is Groot Constantia, founded and built by Simon Van der Stel. Groot Constantia, which lies in the Constantia Valley a few miles out of Cape Town, has a special fascination for historians. Of all the Governors, Simon Van der Stel alone retired to the Cape after his term of office had expired.

He was appointed to the Cape in 1679 as Commander and later raised to the rank of Governor. Van Riebeeck had founded a prosperous refreshment station for ships; Simon Van der Stel transformed it into a colony. Although he was rebuked by the Council of Seventeen in Amsterdam for spending too much of the public funds on beautifying the settlement, he was an enlightened and successful administrator. He founded Drakenstein, French Hoek, Paarl and Stellenbosch, and his love of the arts was such that even on his expedition to Namaqualand in 1685—the first major expedition to be made into the interior—he took his musicians with him.

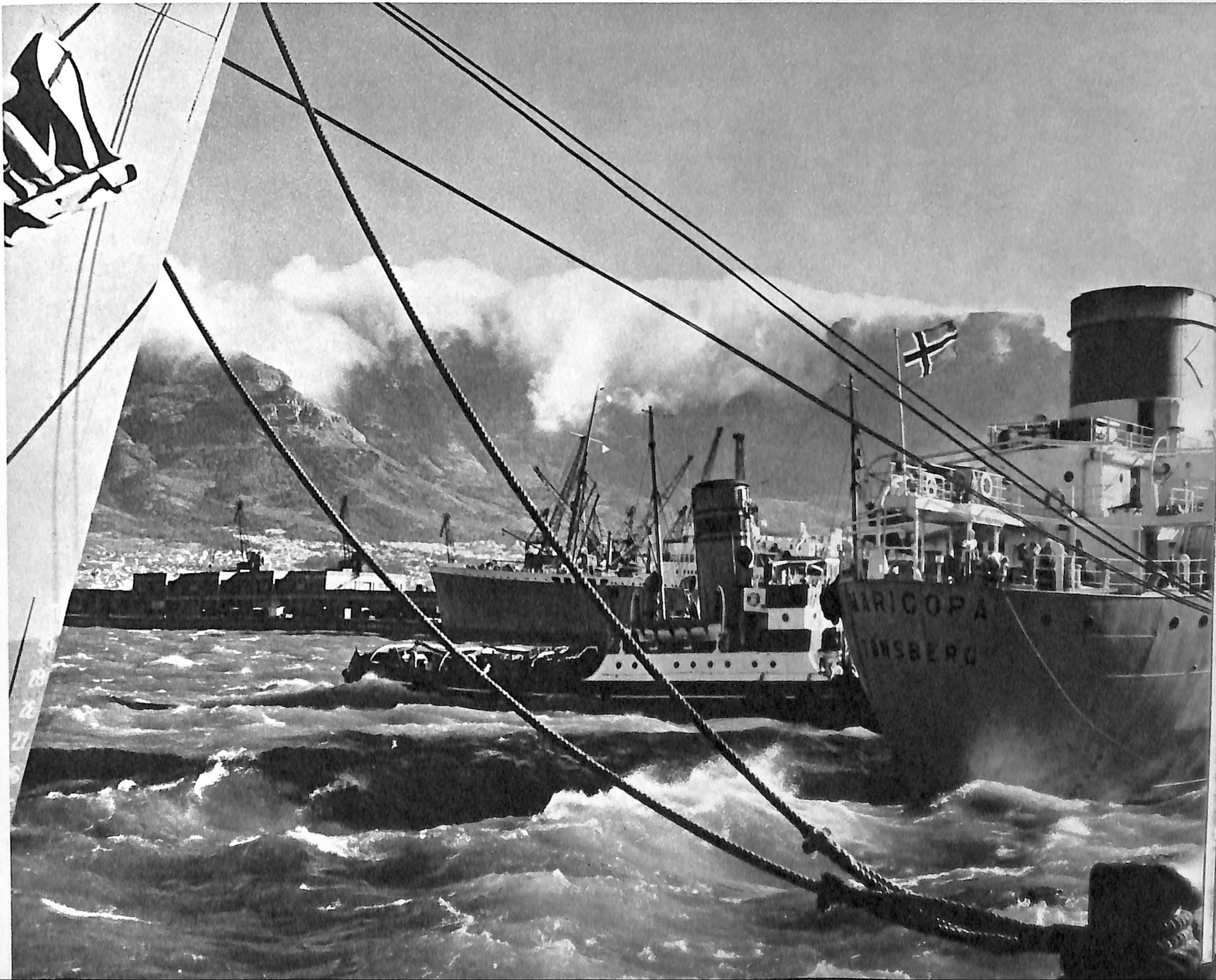
After the expedition Van der Stel was rewarded by a grant of about 1,700 acres of fertile land, in an area he had carefully selected. With the idea of cultivating the grape he had sent baskets of soil from all parts of the Cape to Holland for analysis. He chose the Constantia Valley as the site for his vineyard, and 'Constantia' wine soon achieved renown.

Long after Van der Stel's death, when part of the estate called Groot Constantia had been bought by Hendrick Cloete, an English connoisseur described the wine as 'a fire that did not blaze or scorch but glowed and warmed'. Napoleon, drowning his regrets in exile on St. Helena, had so great a preference for 'Constantia' that at one period he and his entourage were consuming twenty-four bottles a day—until the Governor of the Island protested against the expense. Hendrick Cloete was not only one of the first wine farmers to export his wares, but was also a patron of the arts, filling his house with fine chests, chairs, silver and glass. He enlarged and embellished the house Van der Stel had built seven years before retirement in 1692, and his home was known for prodigal hospitality. The Reverend Latrobe, who took a 'dish of tea' with Cloete in 1816, was delighted with 'the appearance of ancient grandeur' about the place. Groot Constantia remained in the possession of the Cloete family for more than a hundred years. In 1885 it was taken over by the Government as an experimental wine farm. The house, open to the public, still retains its 'appearance of ancient grandeur' and, even though the old 'Constantia' wine whose delicate bouquet so delighted our forefathers can no longer be obtained, the home, the way of life, and the personal possessions of the family who produced it are still preserved for us.

First and last, Cape Town is a city of contrasts. At one moment the air is balmy, the sun shines, clouds float like puffs of thistledown over the mountains, and the sea rocks gently in the Bay. Suddenly there is a change of mood. The twin plumes of smoke from the tall chimneys in Dock Road bend like branches before the wind; rain falls as if all the hosepipes of heaven had been turned on at once; the mountains seem to dissolve into the clouds; the gale shakes the trees with passion; and the sea tears at the breakwater like a tiger. There seems as great a contrast between the eighteenth-century quiet of Leeuwenhof, guarded by its grove of trees only a

stone's throw from the city, and the whirr and rattle of the crane and the cement-mixer as streamlined skyscrapers rise on the Foreshore; between the sedate public buildings that surround the Gardens and the cosmopolitan 'flatland' of Sea Point. Library, Museum, House of Assembly, National Gallery, Archives and churches are clustered round the Gardens. The sightseer or city-dweller can attend a service, visit Parliament or the Planetarium, consult a family document, change a library book, or see a fine collection of pictures within less than a mile's walk.

Cape Town is attractive by day; beautiful by night when the sea shimmers and necklaces of light hang like jewels on the dark breast of the city; but for those who live on the slopes of Table Mountain, unparalleled in the early morning. Then the winking lights go out one by one, the tree-frogs fall silent and the birds begin to call. The town is still asleep under a soft blanket of mist which begins to rise and disperse under the radiance of the sun, colour as transparent as nylon fills the sky behind a chain of mountains across the amphitheatre of the bay, and Table Mountain looms like a protective rampart over the silent city.

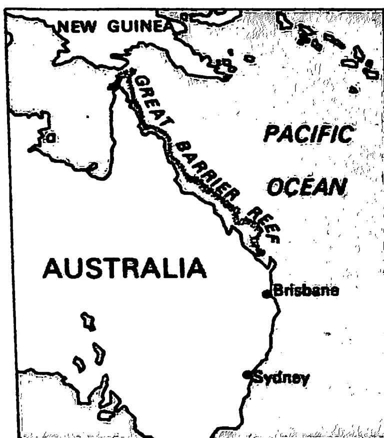


Cape Town's own summer wind, the South-easter, can in seconds whip up the gently lapping waters of the bay into choppy fury and cover Table Mountain with its famous 'tablecloth' of cloud. Although it occasionally blows at 100 m.p.h. or more, it has for generations been affectionately known as the 'Cape Doctor' because it cools the city in summer and allegedly drives away disease-carrying germs

FRANCIS AND KATHARINE DRAKE

Australia's coral Eden

For 1,250 miles the coral wall of the Great Barrier Reef guards the eastern coast of Australia from the giant breakers of the Pacific. This vast framework of limestone is made from the skeletons of an infinity of polyps, laid down over millions of years. It teems with brilliantly coloured fish, and glows with undersea vegetation



UNDER CONSTRUCTION for the past 50 million years, a many-splendoured water wonderland is now attracting an increasing number of fascinated visitors from all parts of the world. This is Australia's Great Barrier Reef, an immense and justly famed coral rampart which wraps itself like a protecting arm round Queensland's seaward shoulder north of Brisbane. Lying twenty to 150 miles offshore, 1,250 miles long and hundreds of feet thick, the Reef covers 80,000 square miles and is far and away the largest structure ever built by living creatures.

One of the wonders of the world, this mighty coral kingdom owes its existence to trillions of insignificant organisms hardly bigger than a pinhead; creatures that cannot see, hear or even move around, and have been building inch by inch over the ages. So vast is the structure wrought by these polyps that few visitors see more than a fraction of it. Many depart without setting eyes on the incomparable Outer Reef where, amid scenes of elemental fury and paroxysms of spray, rock and ocean clash head on in their immemorial battle for supremacy.

The Great Barrier emerges at low tide as an intricate complex of terraces, pools, caverns, crevices and chasms, harbouring virtually every member of marine society. Visitors see everything from the dazzling little firefish, flaunting diaphanous fins like Salome's veils, to the immovable giant clam, more than four feet across, waist-high, and weighing a quarter of a ton. The flight over the Reef's lagoon is breath-taking. We peer in disbelief at a surface of matchless colours—peacock blues shot with turquoise, exuberant purples daubed with gold, violet, jade. From one end of the lagoon to the other, scattered like emeralds, appear hundreds of fairytale islands, sides rising sheer from polished water, edges trimmed with golden beaches, crests gleaming with mint-green jungle vegetation.

The myriad strange and wonderful inhabitants of the Reef are best seen by 'fossicking', an Australian pastime usually defined as 'rummaging around'. Our fossicking outfit is simple—blue jeans, rubber boots, socks, a stick, old leather gloves. The rule for the gloveless is 'don't touch'. Coral scratches become infected quickly in the tropics; and some reef-dwellers sting, nip, spike or poison. The shore-

The living coral which forms the topmost layer of the Great Barrier Reef is exposed to the air only at the lowest spring tide; at other times, seen through the clear water, it is a rainbow-coloured underwater garden





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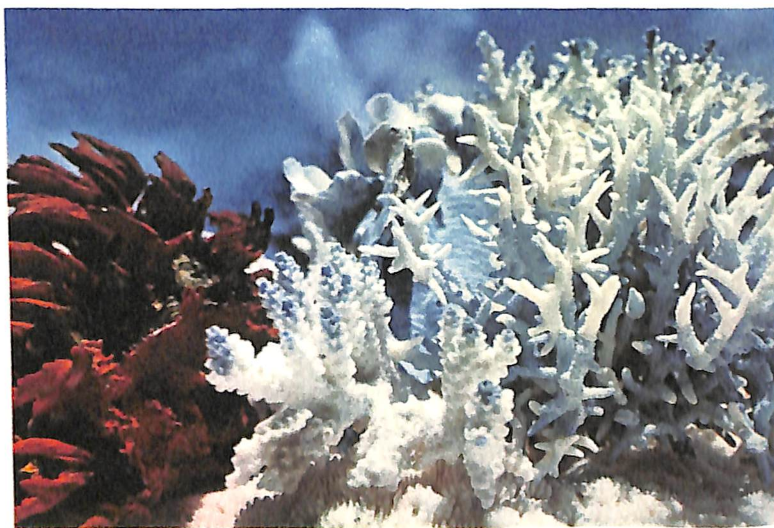
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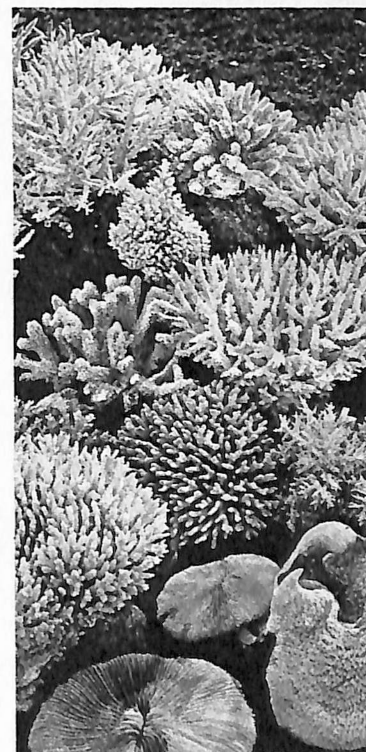
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Creatures of the Great Barrier Reef. 1. The strikingly marked butterfly cod or red fire-fish has long, needle-like dorsal spines which can inflict a dangerous wound. 2. The saddle markings of the rock cod become brighter in colour as the fish becomes excited. 3. The edible blue swimming-crab can easily be recognized by the flattened oar-like form of the end joints of the back legs. 4. Reef crabs are usually found under stones; the female carries her clutch of fertilized red eggs, each smaller than a pinhead, in her abdominal flap. 5 and 6. The most luxuriant coral growths on the Reef are found at depths of between fifteen and eighty feet. The living corals require special conditions for growth—sea water with a high salt content, sufficient light, abundant food, and an average temperature of about 65 deg. F.

hugging seawasp, a few square inches of jelly, can kill a man in two minutes with one sideswiping tentacle. The wisest plan is to go with a veteran fossicker.

At ebb tide, underwater coral gardens appear at the sea-edge, so we hasten across the emerging reef. At the surf line, two turtles are paddling by, only a few yards away, eyes at half-slit, backs big enough for a bridge game, ancient faces expressionless as stone. The water is so clear that it seems not to exist; coral gardens show up with the richness of an Oriental rug. That weird-looking coral sculpture, seemingly only an arm's length away, is actually fifty feet down. So Mad Hatterish is the underwater scenery that in no time we begin 'seeing things'. We discover a navy-blue cauliflower, a rainbow-hued hedgerow and a crop of heliotrope mushrooms growing upside down on pink grass. There are dozens of 'flowers', perfect in texture and outline, but bewildering in colour—blue chrysanthemums, pea-green poppies, lavender apple-blossoms, clumps of jade lilac embowered in shocking-pink ferns. Soon buildings begin to show up—a miniature Tower of Pisa, the façade of the Parthenon. Enough instruments are scattered about—flutes, lutes, organ pipes, bagpipes—to make a full orchestra.

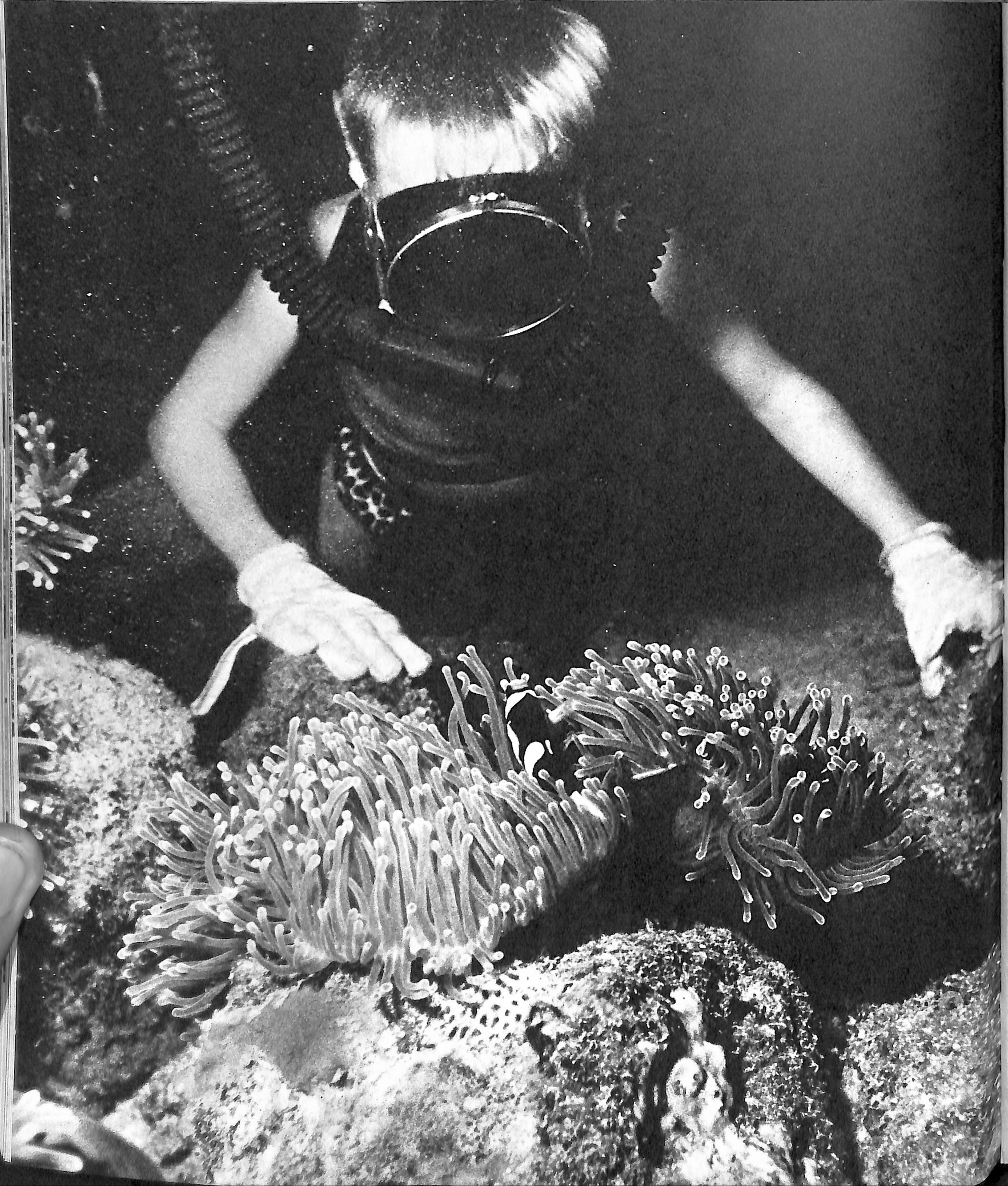
But a sea-edge is no place for wool-gathering. The tide can sneak up and cut off retreat in a matter of minutes. Marooned fossickers, attempting to swim back, have sometimes encountered potential killers—tiger and hammerhead sharks, barracuda, devil rays, sea snakes, octopuses, moray eels. Most feared by Reef waders is the hideous, foot-long stonefish. This is so camouflaged with scabs, warts, slime and bristles that it is almost invisible when lying on the bottom of a pool. Down its back runs a line of thirteen razor-sharp spines, each embedded in twin poison sacs. Few unwary fossickers who have trodden on a stonefish have recovered from even a prick; those who have tell of pain so excruciating that death seemed preferable. But there is no need to fear the harmless dugong. This beast was once, because of its half-human face and sorrowful sighing, believed to be a mermaid.

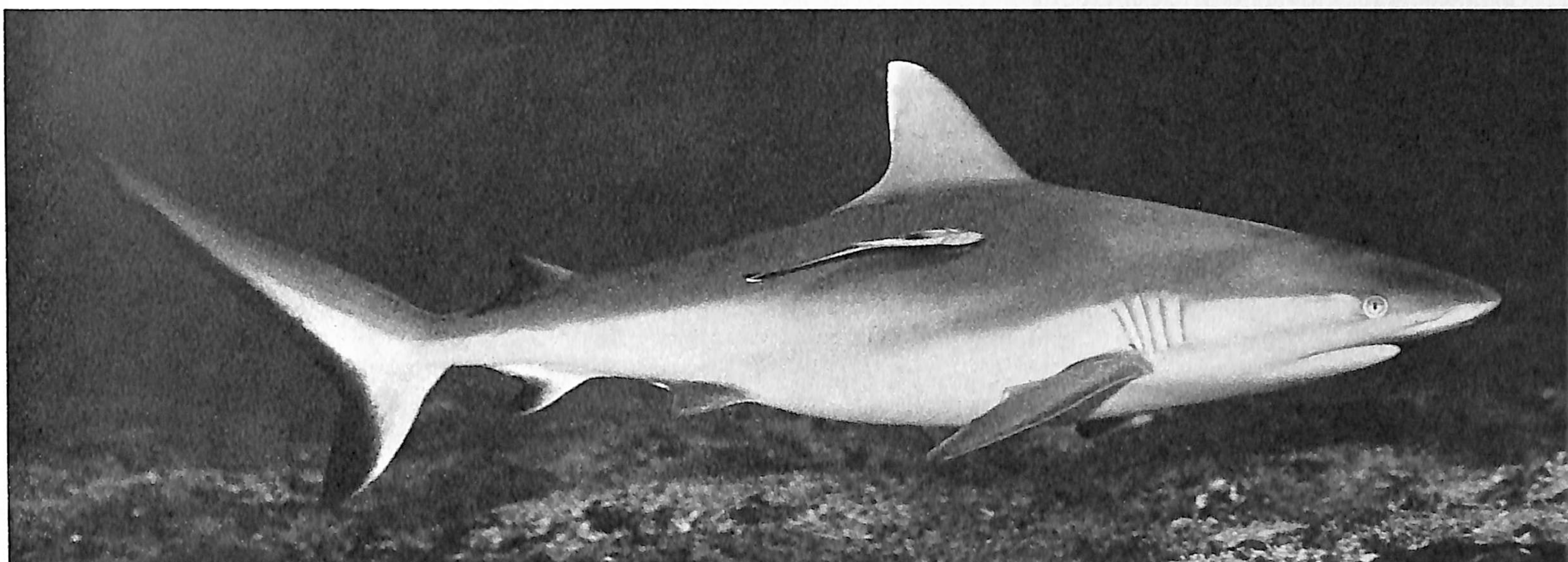


Bleached coral specimens from the Great Barrier Reef. When coral is broken off and brought ashore the polyp contracts and dies. The sun dries the living tissue and bleaches the coral skeleton white

The fish cavorting in the pools are completely unreal. Their colours are dazzling, patterned with tiger stripes, spots, spirals, checks, even asterisks. And just as unorthodox are the shapes—wafer-thin, triangular, rectangular. Others are carbon copies of dragonflies, beer bottles, fountain-pens. We discover an eighteen-inch porcupine-toady that actually has two shapes. Except for the teeth, which can snap barbed wire in two, it looks as sedate as a sole; when we toss in a shell, *presto!* it turns into a dark green balloon, bristling with venom-tipped spikes. We see an orange-red goatfish, harrowing the sand with its pronged beard; a walking fish, which spends most of its time out of water, one eye on the sky, the other revolving. Most bemusing of all is a preoccupied little angler fish peeping over a ledge. It is actually casting—dangling in front of its mouth a miniature fishing rod which sprouts from its brow. Nature even baited its 'line' with a blob like raw meat.

We trudge to where some giant clams wait, hinge-side down, rigid as tombstones. The shell of the biggest one is agape by ten inches, exposing a seaweed-coloured mantle flecked with iridescent green algae. Despite its man-eating reputation, it feeds only on microscopic organisms. We cannot resist touching that great fleshy mantle with our stick to see what will happen. Instantly the monster squirts like a hose; the shell edges move, but they do not slam shut. The clam cannot close without first siphoning off water; this takes six or seven seconds—ample time to withdraw one's hand or foot. Wherever we turn, we encounter the grotesque



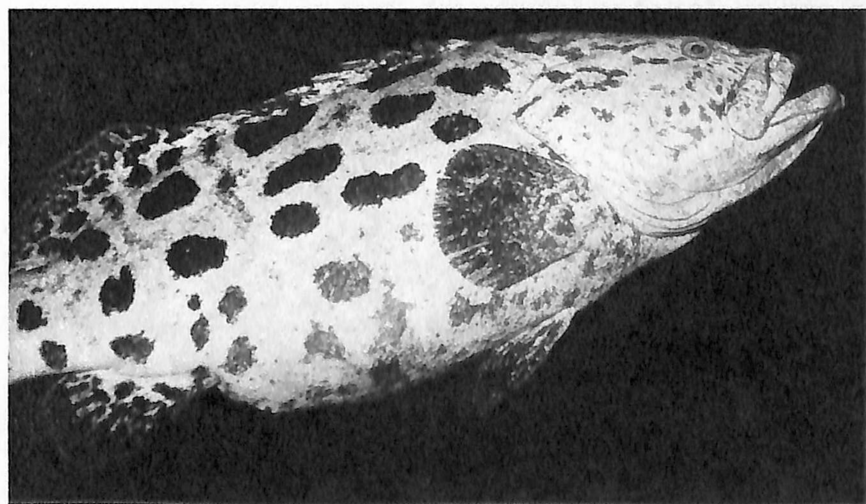






The teeth in a shark's mouth are set in rows one behind the other. Almost as fatal as a shark's bite is a blow from its tail, which is covered in tiny sharp protuberances. Sharks can travel very fast, twisting and turning with great agility. Not all species are dangerous to man

A boy diver *above* wearing an aqualung stretches his hand towards a butterfly codfish, with its fiery brown and yellow stripes and venomous spines. *Left* He watches a damsel or anemone fish emerging from the protection of a sea anemone. This fish lives in the anemone and is immune from its sting



Many species of rock cod, commonly known as groupers, are found off the coasts of Queensland. These carnivorous fish, which frequent rocky shores and reefs, are voracious eaters and prey indiscriminately on any living creature

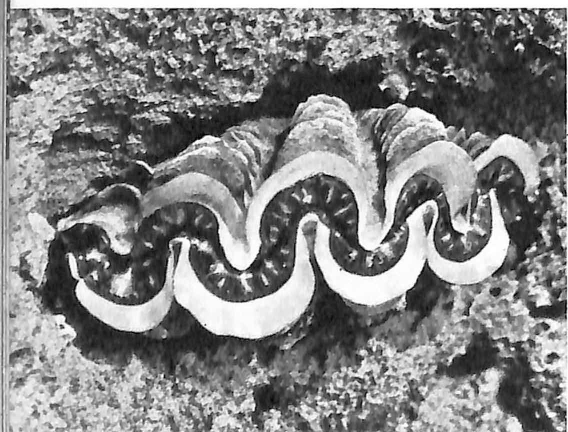
eighteen-inch *bêche-de-mer,* gorging on coral grit, heaving along its obese, inner-tube-like body on tiny retractable feet. A delicacy in Asian circles, it looks dingy and uninteresting until lifted, when a singular capability comes to light: the *bêche-de-mer* simply eviscerates itself. Out fly intestines and other internal organs. Far from dropping dead after this macabre exhibition, the creature promptly grows a complete set of replacements.

Crab armies are all over the place, racing for shelter, vanishing into commandeered shell-homes. One handsome fellow with blazing red eyes and a china-blue back is the size of a soup plate; another, a species of spider crab, is so shaggy that it looks like motorized seaweed. More wonderful shell varieties are found near the Reef than anywhere else in the world. These include the prized pearl shell (the Barrier supplies eighty-five per cent of the world's mother-of-pearl market); the huge, reddish-gold bailer, still used to bail out boats; the perfidious textile and marbled cones, so exquisite that they beg to be picked up, yet so venomous that one touch can be fatal.



The stonefish, found in the shallow reef pools, resembles an eroded piece of coral rock. It has venomous dorsal spines, which can kill a man

Strangely enough, the originator of this vast realm of guile and beauty, the reef-building polyp, is hard to detect, for it is little more than a blob of gelatinous tissue. With only three 'working parts'—mouth, tentacles and inside cavity—it is full of surprises. The all-purpose mouth absorbs food and expels waste. The tentacles conceal secret weapons in the form of numerous coiled whips of stinging cells. When edible organisms brush against the tentacles, the whips lash out, paralysing the victims, which are then drawn into the mouth. Inside its cavity the polyp transforms limy secretions extracted from the sea into a skeleton. As successive generations of coral colonies die, their skeletons gradually pile higher and higher. Cemented by the accumulation of reef debris, they form the basic material of which the whole gigantic structure is composed.



The giant clam weighs between three and four hundredweight, and is usually found on the sandy shore hinge-side downwards

Polyps can live only in depths penetrated by sunlight. Building areas, therefore, must be shallow—fifty to seventy feet. Below 180 feet all polyps perish. Yet bores made in the Barrier Reef show that the coral extends thousands of feet *below* the 180-foot limit. Gradual subsidence of the coast-line is the most generally accepted explanation of this—a theory put forward by a young naturalist named Charles Darwin in 1831. Aeons ago the shore must have extended to the present Outer Reef; the islands were peaks of a towering coastal range. By freak coincidence, the shore sank at the same rate as corals normally grow upward, leaving the lagoon perpetually shallow. Geologists believe that this process may have been going on for 50 million years. The thought of this inconceivable stretch of time adds to the wonder and mystery of the Reef as we come to the end of our fossicking. For the life-giving tide has returned to feed and refresh all that wait on its measureless bounty. The Great Barrier orchestra begins to tune up—a medley of weird sounds: *suck-cluck* from the thirsty clams; *scrape-scrape* from the crabs; and, from countless tiny waterfalls, a decorous murmur.

It is a sound as old as creation, as new as the surf pouring life into yet another generation. It is the pulse of eternity, the mystical throb of all living things.

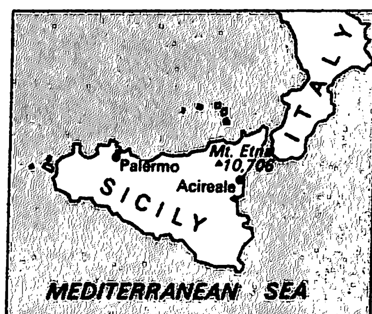
Three living mushroom corals *top*. Two are fully expanded, and one is nearly contracted, showing the central mouth

An underwater fisherman *bottom*, equipped with a mask, fins, a weighted belt and a spear-gun. He brings speared fish quickly to the surface to avoid attracting dangerous sharks

VINCENT CRONIN

Sicilian carnival

Carnival time in the towns and villages around Mount Etna is a week of wild revelry before the austerities of Lent. The processions of grotesque animals and half-human figures express all the hidden frustrations and passions of the villagers—primitive forces exorcized by the cold reality of Ash Wednesday's dawn



AT ACIREALE on the slopes of Etna crowds of people from all the country around parade the main streets on Shrove Tuesday, throwing confetti at one another, blowing trumpets, clowning, setting off fireworks, joking, laughing and shouting. Coloured lights decorate the fronts of houses and the piazzas are illuminated, while from the balconies crowds of spectators throw down paper streamers at the passing flood of participants. Here and there small spaces are formed in the crowd to allow a group of masked figures to dance or clown, but apart from these pools the stream of people flows up and down the street and round the piazzas.

When twilight falls the parade of carts which the crowds have come to watch moves into town, down one long street, round the Piazza del Duomo and back by another route. As many as twenty of these fantastic cars form the procession, some pulled by horses or donkeys, others by small trucks, and they move very slowly, stopping every now and again either for admiration or because the crowd will not yield a passage. A few are quite small and simple: one shows a shark swallowing a small girl, another a loathsome green creature, half frog, half humpty-dumpty. But most are massive constructions, built on a platform which runs on wheels, and carrying as many as twenty masked figures, some dancing or joking, others playing musical instruments.

The first to roll slowly into sight shows the Three Musketeers, great, grotesque, drunken figures with swords askew, sitting astride Chianti bottles. Their faces are both awe-inspiring and ridiculously funny, monstrous and clownish, with long red noses and bulging eyes. Their dress, like the figures themselves, is made from papier mâché, yet in the half-light there seems nothing artificial about either subject or presentation, for that undercurrent of music which comes from the carts themselves steals away all critical sense, so that the rational and absurd become equally acceptable. Next comes a children's playground, with huge overgrown boys and girls see-sawing and riding a roundabout: the animals' heads terrifyingly deformed: the whole tableau decorated in variegated tinsel of riotous colours. Those who are not riding throw streamers at the cars or jump upon the platform beside the monsters to ridicule the musicians with actions and words. No one is a mere spectator: to see a pretty girl is to throw confetti at her, to meet a

pompous old man is to steal for a moment his best hat and set it on an unsuspecting head, to come across a friend is to shower him with abuse.

Last of all comes the archetype: a vast assortment of horned and leering animals, each degraded beneath its natural level, dancing to native African music, behind which, some twenty feet high, towers the head and torso of a man who is even more loathsome than any of the animals, though all are hideous, so that instead of rising above them, as his predominant position might suggest, he is reduced to a level far below the pigs and asses who grovel beneath him. He too keeps time to the wild music, not by dancing but by moving his eyebrows, mouth and ears in unison.

Meanwhile, as the sight and sound of the monsters make their impression on the crowd, people become rowdier and more daring in their jokes. Water is squirted on all sides, smoke let loose and the line of people which before has glided along, now rushes like a torrent down the narrow streets. Those who wear fancy dress and masks give themselves up most freely to the moment: they have lost both inner and outer marks of their personality. They offer no resistance to the wine and pulsing music and to the gleam of their partner's white teeth as she smiles boldly across the dance. They have become princes and cowboys, toreadors and clowns, anything but citizens of Acireale. The town itself has become a sort of never-never land.

Here is the Marchese di Geraci, a Spanish grandee, once viceroy of the island, with powdered periwig and golden coat, with white stockings and buckled shoes, so handsome, his skin like olive, his black eyes excited, his cheeks dimpled when he laughs. On the other side of the square, caught up in the dance, whirls a little Arab girl, with dark, curly hair falling on a mauve, long-skirted dress. They have glimpsed each other already and not by chance meet in the next dance.

By this time the tempo of the music has become faster, while the older couples have grown tired and returned home, leaving the revelry more spirited than ever. The Marquis and the Moorish girl, partners now in all the different rounds, dance alone, oblivious of their surroundings and the rest of the company. Round and round, on and on, hour after hour they dance together until far too soon midnight is struck by the cathedral bell and the dancing comes to an end. But the Marquis and the little Arab girl move to their own music, out through the alleyways into the fields, still without speaking, still without identity, out at last to the earth, under the shadow of Etna, under the spring stars. Darkness falls on Acireale; the fairy lights have been extinguished; confetti and streamers cover the empty streets like a fall of snow. The music, the drunken shouts, the joking—all are annihilated.

At dawn, a grey, sunless dawn, the crowing cock cracks sleep, and the young dreamer who last night was sandalled and masked wakes to a bare narrow room. She rubs her eyes: where now is her Marquis, where the music of the carnival, where the spell she thought would last a lifetime? Again the cathedral bell tolls, but now with a different note. She jumps up from bed and runs to the window: already old women are making for the church door along the littered streets. Ash Wednesday—she had forgotten. She must go out and receive the ashes. As she dons her black clothes, she sees her pretty fancy dress crumpled on the floor—out of place now, a memory. She joins the congregation in the bare stone cathedral and goes up with the others to be marked with the burnt palms. On this child's curls—the boy would boast later that he had received more than his friends; on this old woman's head—dust to dust, ashes to ashes. Beside them kneels the carnival girl.

EDWIN TAYLOR

Jamaican beach party

Since the wild days of Henry Morgan and his buccaneers Jamaica has been a great place for a party, preferably in the open and within sight and sound of the sea. Though the bill is no longer paid in pieces of eight, rum still flows freely, and the most self-controlled tourist finds himself caught up in the rhythmic abandon of the beach musicians



BELOW THE palm trees that fringe the beach at Dunn's River Falls the band beat out the intoxicating rhythms of Caribbean music, while the lithe figure of their leader swayed in time to the maraccas and the bongos. The crowd of tourists had arrived on the beach about noon, bringing food and drink, as well as the band. The music started at a furious pace, then slowed, then quickened again. Gradually the tourists' self-restraint thawed, then vanished altogether, as they threw themselves into the gyrations of the ska, and tried to contort themselves under a gradually lowered bar in the limbo.

Beach parties take place all the time in Jamaica, often at night, when a great bonfire provides the focal point for the activities. At all parties the band is not just a group of hired musicians. They keep the whole thing going by their wit and exuberance, and the friendliness that is typically Jamaican.



The notice confronting visitors to Dunn's River Falls, near Ocho Rios, on Jamaica's north coast, gives the warning 'that every person take the beach and its approaches as he finds it'. *Opposite* A Jamaican musician demonstrates his poise by balancing a tumbler on his head, while other musicians thunder on the bongo drum, shake the maraccas and skirl on the flute



Dancers warming up —and cooling off

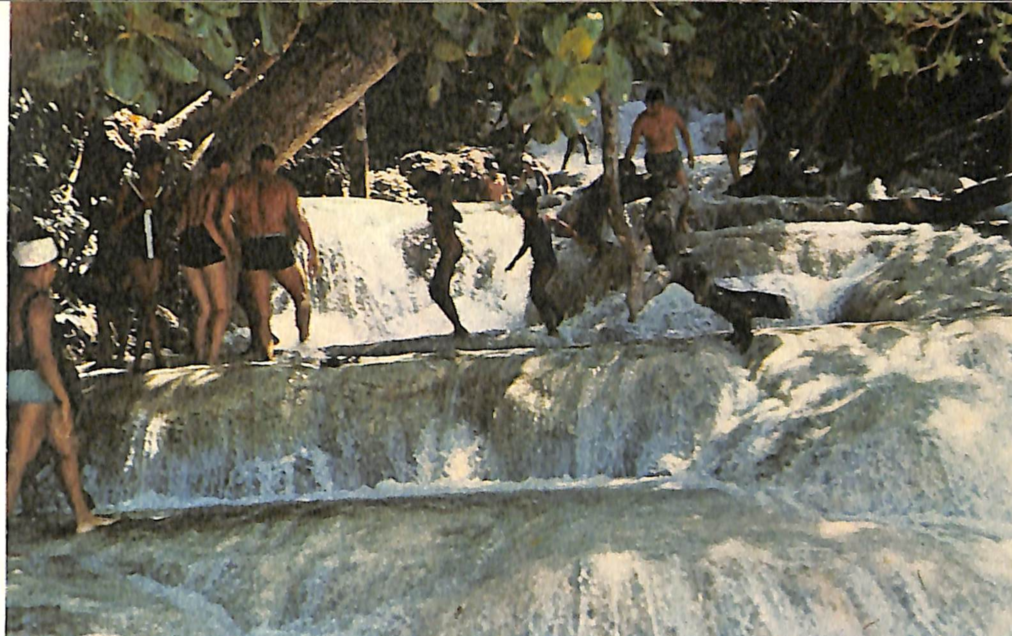




A flash of a gold-filled tooth or an appraising half-smile from girls at a Jamaican beach party. The Jamaicans range from pure Negro to Chinese and East Indian. As the dance continues *right,* a sizeable participant finds the unaccustomed exercise beginning to tell







The lower reaches of Dunn's River Falls. Local guides will help less active visitors to climb to the upper reaches. This remarkable waterfall cascades directly into the sea

Tourists throw up their hands in the ska, a popular dance in Jamaica. The best conclusion to exertions like these is an ice-cold drink, a swim in the warm sea, or a plunge into the cooling waters of the falls



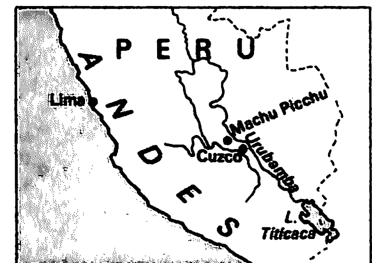
HARLAND MANCHESTER

The Incas' last stronghold

When the golden empire of the Incas fell to Pizarro and his soldiers, the city of Machu Picchu, high and lonely in the central Andes, provided an unconquerable refuge. The last Incas may well have died there one by one, leaving the forest to hide all traces of their mysterious stone fortress

PERCHED DIZZILY astride a mountain saddle between two jagged peaks of the Peruvian Andes, yet sheltered by the towering walls of the surrounding precipices, is a magnificent abandoned citadel which for over half a century has been luring scholars and sightseers from all over the world. They come to marvel at one of the most fascinating archaeological puzzles of the Western Hemisphere and to gaze at a vista of incomparable majesty.





No one knows the city's real name–that is buried with the bones of its people –but it is called Machu Picchu, or Old Peak, after one of its two guardian mountains, and is also known as the 'Lost City of the Incas'. For centuries before its discovery in 1911 by Hiram Bingham, then a young assistant professor of Latin-American history at Yale University, Machu Picchu's ingeniously-built granite temples, its aqueducts, fountains, tombs, terraces and endless staircases were hidden by forests, vines and debris.

Who built Machu Picchu, and when, and why? Some investigators believe the city was built about a hundred years before the Spanish Conquest, although Bingham felt it antedated this period by centuries and was the Incas' earliest city. Its superb craftsmanship suggests dwellers of royal rank. However, its cemetery caves yielded a curious discovery. In its last years Machu Picchu was apparently a city of women. Of 173 skeletons unearthed, some 150 were female. It is thought that a remnant of the shattered Inca Empire, known as the Chosen Women, fled to this ancient retreat to escape the Spanish *conquistadores,* and lived there in state until they died and the forest covered their secret. One reason Machu Picchu remains a mystery is that the Incas had no written language. Much of our knowledge of them comes from chronicles written during the time of the Spanish conquest of Peru.

The Inca Empire, at its height in about 1450, included what is now Peru, most of Ecuador, Bolivia and the northern parts of Chile and Argentina. It was an autocratically ruled state that, as Hiram Bingham said, 'allowed no one to go hungry or cold', and the Inca (the emperor) bound together his diverse empire of

The magnificent ruins of Machu Picchu. The peak in the background is terraced almost to the top for cultivation. The Incas carried tons of top-soil up to their irrigated gardens, which are fertile even now

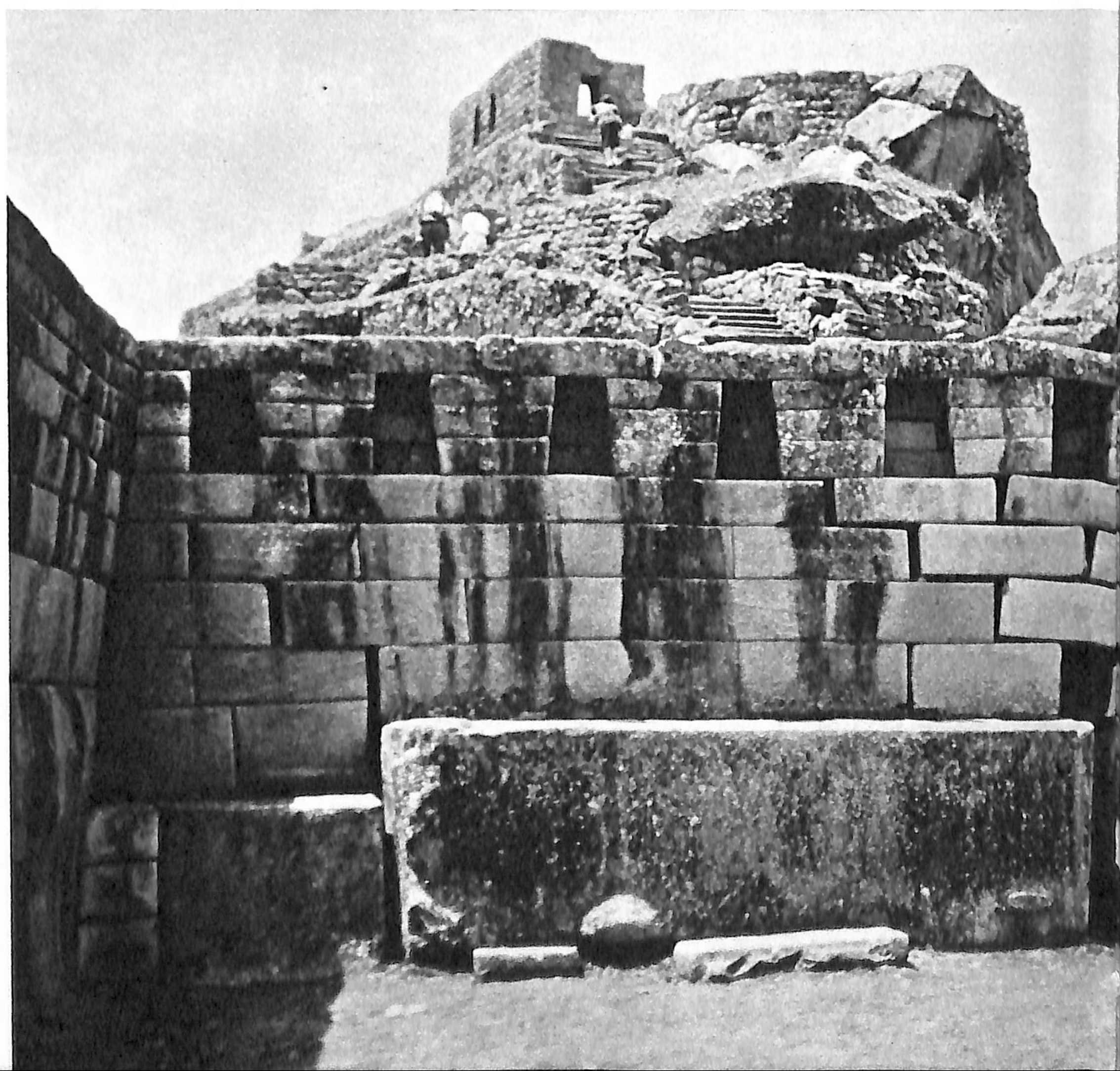
snow-capped mountains, bleak desert and impenetrable jungle with a network of roads. A system of trained runners was so well organized that it is said the ruler in his mountain citadel could enjoy fresh fish from the Pacific.

Visitors to Machu Picchu used to finish the trip by mule up a narrow mountain trail with a precipice yawning beside them. Today an airliner takes you from Lima at sea-level to 11,155-foot Cuzco, the picturesque old Inca capital. By petrol-driven rail-car running on narrow-gauge tracks, you go from Cuzco down the Sacred Valley of the Urubamba River.

Then you plunge into the grim wild canyon that repelled Pizarro, the great *conquistador,* and his musketeers. The tracks wind between dark, overhanging cliffs and the snarling, rock-strewn rapids of the Urubamba. Before you lies the final cliff, a 2,000-foot-high precipitous slope; here the Inca's fighting men once repelled strangers with sling-shots and knobbed maces. Today the Hiram Bingham Highway, a narrow five-mile road with fourteen hairpin bends, climbs the slope. You go up in a bus driven by an Indian who sings lustily to take your mind off the sheer drop to the river below.

The highway ends at an attractive small inn at the base of the old city. When you are ready to exert yourself in the thin air 8,800 feet up, an Indian guide will lead you through the labyrinth of 200 roofless houses and temples.

The silent streets are peopled by ghosts of richly-garbed kings and their ladies, priests, warriors and workers now centuries dead. The Inca *élite,* dressed in full



The ruins of Machu Picchu are invisible from the twisting gorges below. According to one legend, the last Inca king, Manco, fled to the city with chosen followers, mostly women, after a final futile stand against the Spaniards. It was the end of a brilliantly organized civilization, the start of an archaeological treasure hunt which continues today. Visitors to the remains of Inca buildings must use imagination to recapture the splendour of the Peruvian empire: the interior walls are no longer panelled with gold. Francisco Pizarro, leader of the Spanish invaders, held the Inca king Atahualpa to ransom for enough gold ornaments and utensils to fill a room about the same size as the building shown in the picture. The ransom was paid

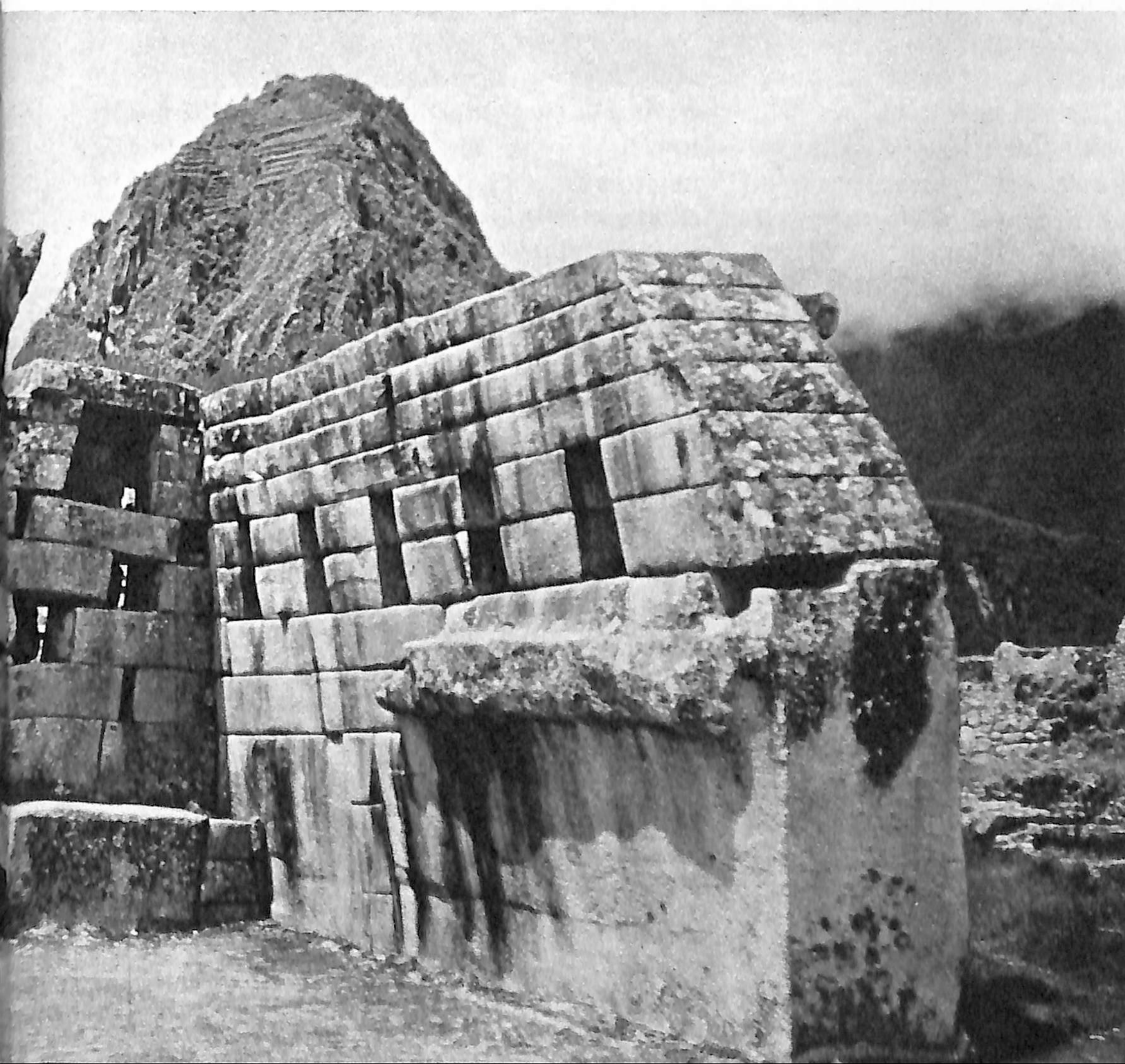
panoply, must have presented a striking spectacle. Many wore mantles of fine vicuna wool woven in intricate and colourful designs; others glinted like the jungle birds whose brilliant plumage they used in head-dresses or wove into long capes.

Thousands of visitors now make the trip to Machu Picchu, which before Bingham's day was guarded by jungles, deadly reptiles, rapids and virtually unscaleable slopes topped by great glaciers. 'Those snow-capped peaks tempted me,' Bingham tells in his book *Lost City of the Incas*. 'In the words of Rudyard Kipling, I felt compelled to "Go and look behind the ranges–something lost behind the ranges. Lost and waiting for you. Go!"'

In his first mule-borne safaris through the Andes and in early chronicles, Bingham had encountered tantalizing rumours about a beautiful 'lost city' somewhere north-west of Cuzco, which the greedy Spanish *conquistadores* had never found. He followed many clues, only to find a few rubble shacks at the end of each trail.

In July 1911, Bingham, with two scientist friends, some Indian helpers and a police-sergeant who had been sent to protect them, set out by mule train along the Urubamba Canyon to track down one more vague lead. For three days, while the Indians chopped the way clear, they plodded and crawled over treacherous hillside trails where even the mules sometimes slipped and had to be hoisted back to save them from the abyss beneath.

One morning a planter appeared at their camp. He told them the familiar story



of ruins on the mountain-top across the river. It was a cold, drizzly day, and Bingham's exhausted partners had no heart for the climb. Bingham hardly expected to find anything, but he persuaded the reluctant planter and the sergeant to join him. First they crawled over the foaming rapids on a fragile Indian bridge tied together with vines. Then they scrambled up the slope on all fours, using shrubbery for handholds, while the planter shouted warnings about the venomous fer-de-lance snakes, which later killed two of their mules. At the end of a gruelling 2,000-foot climb they came suddenly upon a grass hut. Two Indians gave them a drink of cool water. Just round the corner, they said, were some old houses and walls.

Bingham rounded the hill and halted in amazement at a spectacle now compared with the Great Pyramid and the Grand Canyon rolled into one. First he saw a flight of nearly a hundred beautifully constructed stone-faced terraces hundreds of feet long—an enormous hillside farm stretching to the sky. Untold centuries ago, armies of stone-masons had built these walls, cutting the rocks and moving them by manpower, without wheels, steel or iron. More armies of workers had carried tons of topsoil, perhaps from the valley below, to make arable land that is still fertile. Beyond the terraces lay more marvels, then partly concealed by undergrowth. The following year Bingham led a full-scale scientific expedition to the spot. Machu Picchu was opened to the world.

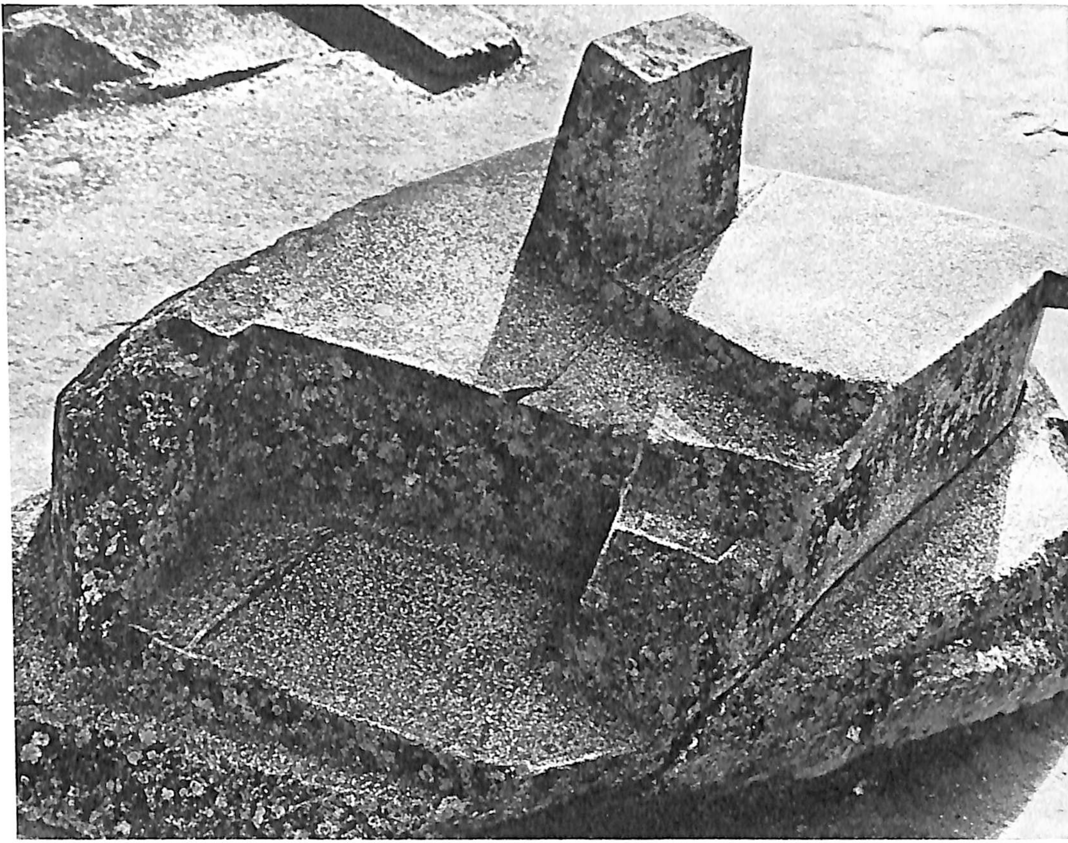
Its greatest glory is its array of superb, tapering walls. On the citadel's crown, where the Incas are believed to have worshipped their 'ancestor' the Sun, temples made of the world's finest primitive stonework represent the toil of generations of master artisans. Men who know tools and building methods gather in admiration round these granite walls and speculate in many languages.

They note that no two blocks are alike: each was carved for its special place, with odd angles and protuberances meticulously fashioned to fit its neighbours, like a piece in a jigsaw puzzle. The builders of these walls used no mortar. Yet so fine was their workmanship that not even a knife-blade can be inserted into the mortarless joints. The builders' tools were bronze chisels, heavy bronze crowbars, and perhaps sand used as an abrasive. Many of the blocks weigh several tons, and must have been pulled into place over skids and rollers by crews of men tugging at ropes made from vines. About a mile away, on the hill above the city, is the old stone quarry, where giant half-hewn blocks still suggest work in progress.

The main streets of this city in the clouds are stairways; there are over a hundred of them, large and small. The central avenue of steps leads from the lowest level past dozens of houses to the city's crest.

The Machu Picchu water-supply system is an ingenious procession of fountains, roughly bisecting the city from top to bottom, which once brought water within easy distance of the thousand or so inhabitants. Led by stone aqueducts from springs about a mile up the mountain, the water was piped to the fountains through an intricate network of holes bored through the thick granite walls. A stream poured in at the top of each fountain so that women could fill their earthenware jars, then fell to a basin carved in the rock beneath and passed through a duct to the next fountain in the long cascade.

Seen from the mountain above, Machu Picchu juts skywards as an impregnable fortress, which a handful of men could defend. Far below, the silver ribbon of the Urubamba twists in a horseshoe curve round the base of the city.



The Incas worshipped the sun—the Giver of Life. The traditional sundial, like this one, measured seasons and served as an altar for religious rites. The massive and intricate masonry of Machu Picchu was the work of a race of master builders. Structures in the rainy highlands were generally of stone; those along the dry coastline were of clay. At Machu Picchu the walls are a combination of rough stone and carefully dressed slabs. The blocks were so accurately chiselled and so skilfully keyed together that no mortar was necessary. The Incas built bridges and roads, and produced superb textiles and ceramics. But they never achieved writing or a calendar system. And they never knew iron, the wheel, or glass

The natural bulwarks were fortified by an outer wall, an inner wall and a dry moat, plus an intricate locking device carved in the massive city gate. Such elaborate protection suggests that the city must have been an important inner bastion of the empire, and perhaps an ancestral and religious shrine. On what he called the Sacred Plaza, Bingham found the remains of a stately white granite temple, with a sacrificial altar and many niches that could have held revered objects.

His most exciting finds are the carved walls of a mansion with 'three windows facing the rising sun', like the legendary royal house from which the first Inca is said to have gone forth to found the dynasty.

The whole city builds skywards towards a sacred objective: the traditional Inca sundial, which measured the seasons for the sun-worshipping Andes people. In an all-important rite at the winter solstice, the priests 'tied' the sun to a tall stone plinth that juts up from a platform—all carved from one huge boulder.

In the prime of Inca rule, provinces all over the empire maintained schools where the most comely and talented damsels were trained for service in the households of the ruler or his nobles, and to assist in religious rites. Many of these schools were ravaged by the Spaniards, and Bingham suggested that a surviving group had been secretly brought to Machu Picchu, there to preserve the time-honoured worship of the sun, the moon, the thunder and the stars until the bearded white killers were driven from the land. One by one the women died as the years rolled by. The jungle crept over their temples, and no one remained to tell of their vigil.

Machu Picchu may always remain an enigma. Yet no one can stand on the city's crest and survey the vast, tumbling grandeur of the upper Andes without feeling the lure of its ancient glories.

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